OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro* GAMER™



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25-YEAR REUNION
DUNGEON MASTER
THE ORIGINAL TEAM RETURN TO THE ICONIC GAME THAT CHANGED RPGS



SEND IN THE CLONES
20 CLASSIC VIDEOGAMES THAT HAVE BEEN REIMAGINED FOR XBOX LIVE

SUPER SOCCER
REVISITING THE BEST FOOTBALL GAME TO APPEAR ON THE SUPER NINTENDO

THE ORIGIN OF ELECTRONIC ARTS
TRIP HAWKINS ON BUILDING A VIDEOGAME EMPIRE

"I HAD THE IDEA TO MAKE COMPUTER GAMES BEFORE YOU COULD GET A COMPUTER"



GLEAMING THE TUBE
TEMPEST
DAVE THEURER ON CREATING HIS HIT ARCADE GAME

AMIGA BEATER
ATARI ST
WHY THE 16-BIT COMPUTER WAS MORE THAN A MATCH FOR COMMODORE'S MACHINE

CONTROVERSIAL GAMES

IN THIS ISSUE OF RETRO GAMER

18 NOTORIOUS VIDEOGAMES THAT CENSORS DIDN'T WANT YOU TO PLAY

IMAGE WORKS
HOW MIRRORSOFT CREATED A YOUTHFUL NEW BRAND FOR ITSELF

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THE FINAL VERDICT ON ULTIMATE'S MISSING GAME

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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ELECTRONIC ARTS GAME?



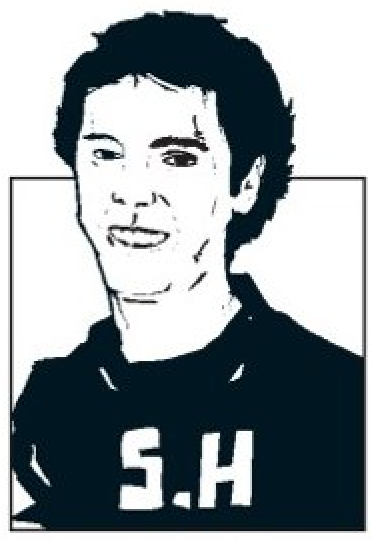
DARRAN JONES

Dead Space. Yes, it's a new franchise, but it immediately became relevant to the genre. So much so that Capcom has admitted to taking inspiration from it for *Resident Evil 6*.

Expertise:
Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine.

Currently playing:
Magic 2013

Favourite game of all time:
Strider



STUART HUNT

I have a soft spot for *Twisted*, but *Road Rash 3DO* blew me away. I was a fan of the series anyway, and the enhanced visuals and rocking soundtrack was pure cake icing.

Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them

Currently playing:
Scribblenauts Remix

Favourite game of all time:
Scribblenauts Remix



PAUL DRURY

I have happy memories of tinkering with the *Pinball Construction* and *Racing Destruction Sets* – user-generated content the old-fashioned way.

Expertise:
Super Zapping

Currently playing:
Gravity Rush

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



DAVID CROOKES

I actually had a soft spot for *Skate Or Die!*, which, I've just learned on Wikipedia so it must be true, was the first internally produced EA game.

Expertise:
All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation

Currently playing:
Skate Or Die!

Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



JASON KELK

The EA game I remember enjoying the most is *Racing Destruction Set*, usually racing friends around tracks we'd built in the editor.

Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero

Currently playing:
Galaga Legions DX (Xbox 360)

Favourite game of all time:
Io



MARTYN CARROLL

Battlefield 1943. I've sunk more hours into it than all of the RPGs I've played combined. The *Strike* games are also some of my favourites.

Expertise:
Games you could POKE

Currently playing: Some *Harry Potter* game)

Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy



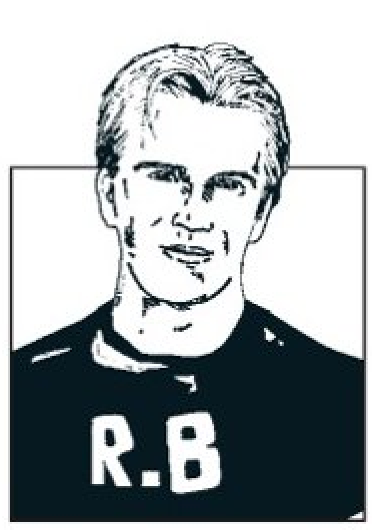
PAUL DAVIES

A Bard's Tale. I played it with a few friends, all taking turns at the keyboard, thinking we had better strategies at killing Kobolds. I could picture the whole thing; it was amazing.

Expertise:
Banging my head against a brick wall

Currently playing:
Halo: Reach

Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts



RICHARD BURTON

Medal Of Honor: Frontline
The tense atmosphere of the WW2 settings kept me engrossed and mesmerized for months.

Expertise:
Stuff and nonsense

Currently playing:
Blue Print

Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



ANDREW FISHER

Skate Or Die!. Radical attitude, great Rob Hubbard music and five challenging, skateboard-based events.

Expertise:
30 years of gaming, Commodore 64 a speciality

Currently playing:
Lego Batman 2

Favourite game of all time:
Wizball

LOADING...



If there is one thing we pride ourselves on at Retro Gamer, it's our ability to respond to feedback. Of course, sometimes there are always going to be examples where we don't see eye-to-eye, but when people come up with great ideas, then we want to listen to them, and most importantly act on them.

This month sees some of those actions coming to pass, with articles on the Atari ST and the most controversial games of all time. These articles are a direct result of people approaching us with concerns that certain topics weren't getting enough coverage, so we've done everything we can to turn around some entertaining articles that we're sure you'll enjoy.

It doesn't stop there, though, as next month will continue this theme, with a handful of features that will be directly influenced by you, the reader. If you're not a member of our forums then I'd really appreciate it if you can sign up at **www.retrogamer.net/forum**. It's a friendly place and in the feedback section you'll find a thread where you can add your own ideas. Failing that, you can send always us an email or letter to the usual addresses. We'd love to hear your thoughts.

Enjoy the magazine,





CONTENTS



>> Load 105 Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED

THE ORIGIN OF ELECTRONIC ARTS



RETRO REVIVALS

In the hot seat this month…





"One of the strongest platformers ever" Samuel Roberts





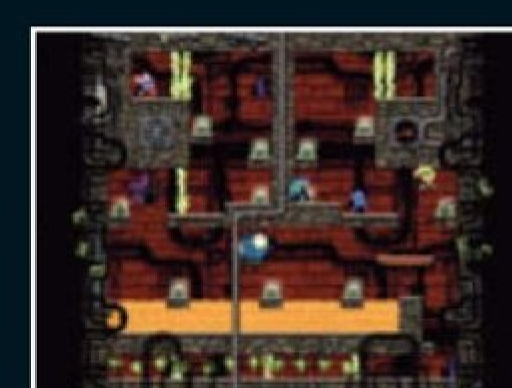




ESSENTIALS

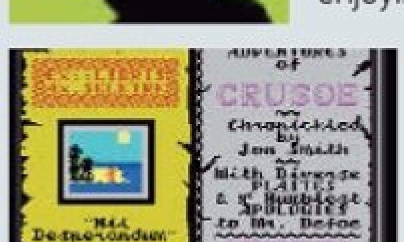
RETRO RATED





retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL







retro radar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> It's been something of a quiet month this issue, even with the fallout of E3. Still we've dug up some nuggets, including a look at Jim Bagley's cool arcade conversion of *Manic Miner*, and Disney's videogame love-in *Wreck-It Ralph*.

CONTENTS



A RETRO LOVER'S GUIDE TO E3

FOUND ALL THE COVERAGE FROM THIS YEAR'S E3 A LITTLE OVERWHELMING? WORRY NOT! WE'VE DECIDED TO LOOK AT ALL OF THE E3 COVERAGE AND BREAK DOWN ALL OF THE IMPORTANT RETRO-RELATED ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS FROM THIS YEAR'S EXPO INTO ONE SIMPLE BITE-SIZED SUMMARY. ENJOY

Nintendo

GAME & WARIO
This rebranded successor to the *WarioWare* series will make an example of the Wii U controller, with a selection of new and inventive mini-games that will use the tablet's tilt controls and even turn it into a camera.

LUIGI'S MANSION: DARK MOON
The 3DS sequel to Luigi's spotlight GameCube title, *Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon*, will play things closely to the original but bring a greater emphasis on puzzling, as well as an assistant for Luigi in Toad.

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS 2
The 3DS follow-up to the super-successful *New Super Mario Bros* will have a retro focus on coin collection and mark the popular return of the Power Leaf.

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS U
The sequel will support up to five-player multiplayer, with the fifth able to manipulate the environment using the Wii U pad, and introduce new power-ups to the mix.



NINTENDO LAND
A Wii U launch title set in a theme park of mini-games, each one themed around a classic Nintendo franchise and designed to show off the functionality of the Wii U controller.

PAPER MARIO: STICKER STAR
The fourth *Mario RPG* game is heading to the 3DS, marking the series' handheld debut. As its title hints, there will be a focus on Mario finding, purchasing and applying stickers to solve puzzles.

PIKMIN 3
Originally in development for the Wii before its development shifted to Wii U, *Pikmin 3* will feature lush high-def visuals and make use of the various functions of the Wii U controller.

Bethesda

DOOM 3: BFG EDITION
This HD re-release of *Doom 3* will feature enhanced sound and visuals, a display mode that's compatible with 3D televisions, new levels, and full versions of *Doom*, *Doom 2* and *Doom 3: Resurrection Of Evil*.

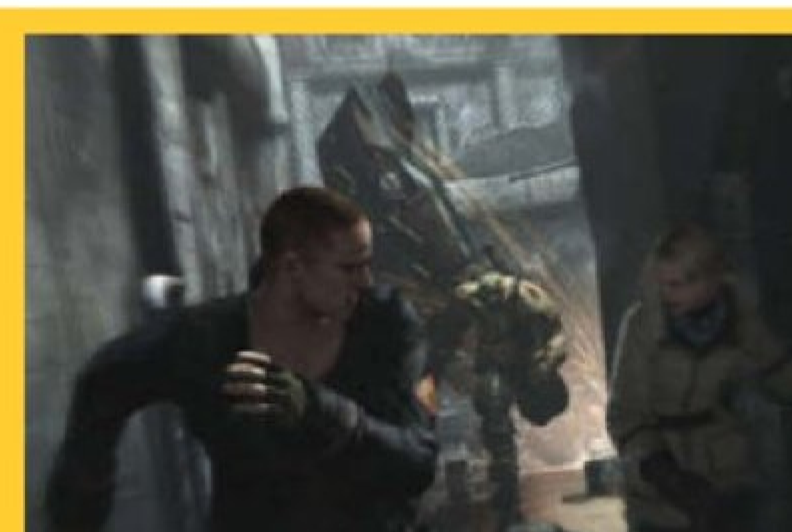
THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE
The fantasy world of Tamriel will finally get to stretch its legs out in an MMORPG. Set 1,000 years before *Skyrim*, the story of *The Elder Scrolls Online* will be completely unconnected to previous games.



CAPCOM

RESIDENT EVIL 6
With a section that takes place inside a creepy mansion and another that sees players high-tailing it from a *Nemesis*-styled enemy, you get a sense that Capcom is revisiting what has worked for *Resident Evil* in the past for its latest instalment.

DMC: DEVIL MAY CRY
This stunning-looking reboot has divided fans, and will see Ninja Theory introduce a younger, fresher-faced Dante who must battle against a demon-infested town. We're confident that the British studio can capture the Capcom magic.



ACTIVISION

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER HD
The impressive HD update of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* is coming to digital platforms and will include courses from the first two games. It could be the perfect stunt to get the series back in people's good books, following the disappointing *Ride* and *Shred*.



KONAMI

CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW 2
The sequel to 2010's *God Of War*-styled *Castlevania* title will reunite fans with Gabriel. Now a bloodsucker, he sets out to banish a new evil while also crossing paths with the Belmont family.

CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW: MIRROR OF FATE
A hack-and-slash for the 3DS that's feels very much in the traditional 2D spirit of the series, *Mirror Of Fate* will feature fan favourites Simon Belmont and Alucard, and will have a story that will bridge *Lords Of Shadow* with its sequel.

METAL GEAR RISING: REVENGEANCE
The award for the craziest E3 trailer has to go to Platinum Games' *Bayonetta* take on *Metal Gear*. The results are predictably insane: bleeding tanks, lots of shouting and intriguing free-slicing swordplay.

SILENT HILL: BOOK OF MEMORIES
Developed by WayForward Technologies, *Book Of Memories* is an upcoming Vita game that drops the horror franchise into the *Gauntlet* template. With concerns that it doesn't looking particularly terrifying, we're not convinced about the direction.



SEGA

JET SET RADIO HD
Coming to XBLA, PSN and Steam, this HD remaster of the Dreamcast cel-shaded classic will feature enhanced widescreen visuals, an online leaderboard and improvements to the camera system.

SONIC & ALL-STARS RACING TRANSFORMED
Sumo Digital is back in the driving seat of the second instalment of Sega's mascot racing series. With new characters, refined mechanics, transforming karts and a deeper single-player mode, it all sounds promising.

THE CAVE
The first game from Ron Gilbert since joining Double Fine Productions, *The Cave* is an intriguing platform adventure game that looks like *Spelunker* spliced with *Maniac Mansion*.

SUPER MONKEY BALL: BANANA SPLITS
Marking the series' Vita debut, you'll get to steer the Zorbing monkeys around using the portable's tilt functionality and be able to instantly create new stages by taking photos. Hopefully it works a lot better than *Barcode Battler*.

AND THE REST

2K GAMES
XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

SQUARE ENIX
TOMB RAIDER, FINAL FANTASY XIV, HITMAN: ABSOLUTION

TECMO KOEI
DEAD OR ALIVE 5, NINJA GAIDEN 3: RAZOR'S EDGE

MICROSOFT
JOE DANGER: THE MOVIE, SHOOT1UP

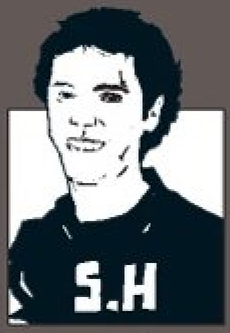
SONY
SLY COOPER: THIEVES IN TIME, RETRO CITY RAMPAGE

EA
NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED, SIMCITY, SIMCITY SOCIAL

NAMCO BANDAI
TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

UBISOFT
RAYMAN LEGENDS, SPLINTER CELL BLACKLIST

The games we're most excited about



Stuart Hunt
Tomb Raider, *Joe Danger* and *The Cave* are my picks for this year's E3. The new *Tomb Raider* looks particularly interesting. The gritty, mature survival-action approach seems a clever way to set the franchise apart from *Uncharted*. And *The Cave*? Well, anything from Ron Gilbert and I'm there on day one. All in all I've been extremely happy with this year's announcements.



Darran Jones
The game I'm most looking forward to is *Joe Danger: The Movie*, as I absolutely adored the original and it looks like Hello Games has added plenty of cool new ideas for the series. *Retro City Rampage* is also on my to-do list and is shaping up nicely, while the thought of being able to play *Jet Set Radio* on my Vita is getting me tremendously excited.

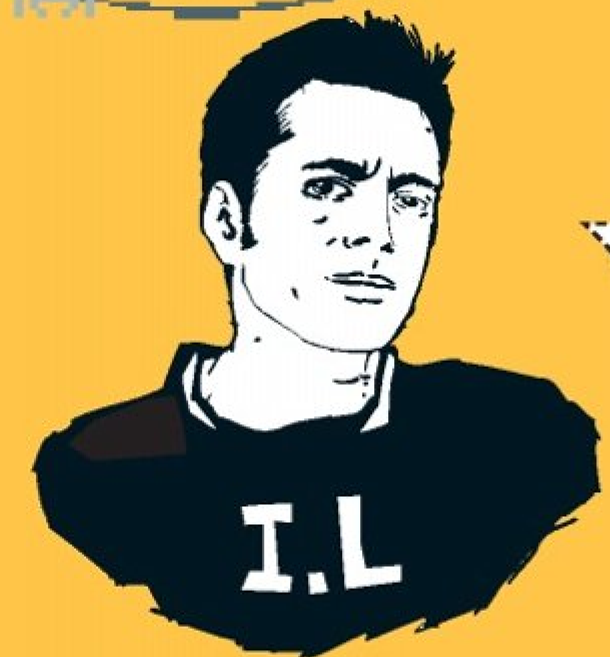


Ashley Day
It absolutely has to be *Retro City Rampage*. Years of effort have gone into this *GTA*-style pastiche of all things Eighties, and it looks like the ultimate interactive celebration of our youths, to me. Other than that, it's great to see PSone Classics confirmed for PS Vita. *Suikoden* and *Tomba* on the go? Yes please.



David Crookes
Final Fantasy Legends is finally being translated into English and it's coming to iOS and Android, which is just brilliant news. The MIDI music sounds amazing and I just love the 2D styling, as any retro nut would do. I'm playing more and more games on my iPhone and iPad and the more stuff like this there is to get, the better.

Here's the bio...
Iain Lee is a freelance broadcaster who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. He used to present *The 11 O'Clock Show*, but please don't hold that against him. You can find more information about Iain at **www.iainlee.com**



Hi there. My name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits and The 11 O'Clock Show, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro gaming

But Is It Retro?

I often read angry letters in RG giving the staff a right royal rollicking for writing about games and consoles that "aren't retro". What the hell does that actually mean? What *is* retro? At what point does something cross the line from being current, to being this mythical 'retro' that we all love? Is there a grey area that it has to pass through before it can be written about? Is there a specific date? Do we all see the same thing when we see green? Is the cat dead or alive, and why the hell is the cat in the box in the first place? Jesus, Schrödinger, sort your life out, you cat/box pervert.

I ask these questions not only to use up part of my word count, but also in an attempt to genuinely find an answer. It's confusing, isn't it? And I became even more confused when earlier this month I played a game I hadn't played for a while, with a bunch of mates online and marvelled at how slow and, well, retro-looking it was.

It wasn't a BBC game, nor a SNES, not even a PS1. And we would all agree *that* is retro, wouldn't we? No, I can see some of you shaking your heads. Oh dear. You are going to hate where this is going, then.

It was a 360 game.

For a long time, I was obsessed with this little bundle of joy and thought it was the most advanced shooter there had ever been. I could not stop playing it. But what I saw then as stealth and skill now seems slow and old fashioned. You play a soldier, but you have no run button and you can't climb over walls.

Now, we would undoubtedly be up in arms if we bought a game like that and would insist the makers gave us a 'patch' (or DLC if you're one of the kids) that made the game more how we wanted it. (Are you picking up my subtle satirical point here, eh, *Mass Effect* whingers?)

The game was released in 2006! It can't be retro, can it? (I think this article wins the award for most rhetorical questions in one piece, don't you?)

Can you tell what it is yet? *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Vegas*. I have had the best few nights in the past month meeting up with my mates and playing a really slow, thoughtful, not brilliant-looking, *retro* game. And it's six years old. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, complainers. And then shove it up your bum for good measure.

I guess the point of this rant is that retro is such a fluid term that it has no real structure. It is different to us all. You can't define it to an era, or a console or a genre. If the mag prints a game that you don't like, or don't approve of, or don't think fits the definition you have in your head, turn the page, because the next one will.

So stop giving Darran and his team a hard time. If you still have an issue with it, get *R6V* for the 360 (it's about £1.98 in Game) come online and I will kick your ass. Sorry, been playing with too many Americans recently.



Put that in your pipe and smoke it, complainers

DISNEY WRECKS GAMES

DISNEY UNVEILS ITS LOVE LETTER TO CLASSIC VIDEOGAMES



» *Wreck-It Ralph* will feature the voices of Sarah Silverman and John C Reilly, and game character cameos from three decades of gaming.

From classic Eighties family movies like *Tron* and *The Last Starfighter* to documentaries like *The King Of Kong* and *Indie Game: The Movie*, videogames have long been the focus of filmmakers and producers over the years. However, there is one type of videogame movie yet to come from Hollywood: one that unites famous gaming heroes in one story. Well, that wait is now over.

Walt Disney Animation Studios has teamed up with Emmy-winning director Rich Moore (*The Simpsons*, *Futurama*) for its upcoming computer-animated film, *Wreck-It Ralph*. Being described as the *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* of videogames, it tells the tale of an Eighties videogame baddie named Wreck-It Ralph, who decides to break out of his game after becoming disenchanted with playing the bad guy. Hopping into other videogames, including a *Call Of Duty*-style FPS called *Hero's Duty* and colourful kart racer titled *Sugar Rush*, he embarks on a journey to prove that he has what it takes to be a hero.



Giving an amusing taster of just some of the cameos from videogames characters the film has been promising, the debut trailer is already generating big buzz within the games industry. Among the familiar gaming characters already confirmed for appearance are Zangief, Chun-Li, M Bison, Dr Robotnik, Bowser and sweary ball nostril Q*Bert.

The movie looks superb, and Disney seems keen to appeal to gamers of all generations. In fact, it's even gone to the effort of creating a faux videogame for the movie's official website. Titled *Fix-It Felix Jr*, it's an addictive little time-waster that looks like *Donkey Kong* and captures the feel of a classic Eighties arcade game to a tee. Playing the role of handyman Felix, you have to clean up after walking wrecking ball Ralph by repairing the windows he smashes and avoiding the bricks he rains down using his giant fists.

Wreck-It Ralph will feature the voices of John C Reilly, comedian Sarah Silverman and *30 Rock*'s Jack McBrayer and will be smashing into cinemas this November.

BEST APPEARANCES

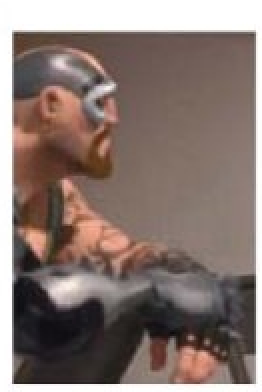
A few of our favourite cameos from Wreck-It Ralph

Clyde
Pac-Man



No videogame love letter would be complete without a nod to *Pac-Man*. Whether the yellow ghostbuster actually turns up himself in the movie is unknown, but we do know that Clyde does.

Kano
Mortal Kombat



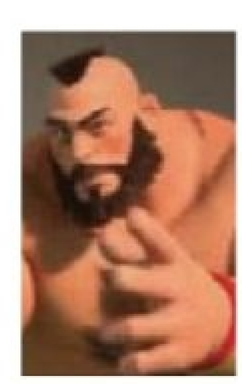
A little odd that a criminal kingpin whose party trick is removing still-beating hearts without a scalpel or medical training is in a Disney movie. Perhaps Kano's mellowed a bit with age.

Q*Bert
Q*Bert



Fix It Felix Jr tries to communicate with the pyramid-hopping hero but comes unstuck on account of his Q*Bertese being rusty. Or is it because it's a family film and swearing is prohibited?

Zangief
Street Fighter II



Zangief joins Chun-Li, M Bison and Cammy but has the biggest part in the trailer, explaining to Ralph in a support group meeting that "just because you're a bad guy doesn't make you a bad guy."

Dr Robotnik and Bowser
Sonic and Mario



Gaming's Wile E Coyote appears alongside his contemporary, Bowser. They don't say much, though Bowser does burp a fireball in disgust when Ralph says that he's tired of being bad.

retrocolumns

>> PAUL DAVIES GIVES HIS VIEWS ON THE RETRO WORLD

Here's my bio…
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.



Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years

Controversial, therefore I am

Like rock 'n 'roll in the Fifties, it wasn't so long ago that gaming almost needed controversy to be investigated beyond the bedroom doors of its fledgling advocates.

I steer clear of trouble while roaming from A to B around town, and I've never much enjoyed wading in on videogame controversy debates either. The truest controversies have hurt too much for me to go near out of respect to families involved, most notably Columbine in 1999. The daftest ones, in my opinion, didn't deserve the attention of anyone, no matter how many billboards were installed at a trade show: for me, *Carmageddon* and *Postal* were like a combined dose of haemorrhoids and VD in the late Nineties.

Despite games as far back as *Custer's Revenge* for the Atari VCS in 1983, which I've only read about, videogames have rarely set out to be controversial as a means of grabbing attention. I believe that the games industry, certainly where consoles are concerned, has fostered a sense of pride in delivering pulse-racing though inoffensive entertainment if only to ensure that games sells to largest audience. You know, even *Mortal Kombat* in the early Nineties was just gory goofiness. But, boy, did Acclaim milk the reception of the mainstream media to make this the monster every kid wanted at home.

If you read my stuff in **RG**, probably as a last resort while searching for things you haven't already seen, you'll know I grew up on equal parts heavy metal and computer games. Individuals such as Ozzy Osbourne, Blackie Lawless and Gene Simmons enjoyed controversy for apparently being in league with Satan. Likewise bands like Venom, Slayer and a whole host of European death metal acts made spookiness their bread and butter.

All planned, and alternative media like good old *Kerrang!* fought to ride that wretched wave. In America an organisation called the PMRC (Parents Music Resource Centre) was established to protect kids from being led astray. It was all very serious, even Frank Zappa got involved to defend, but seems so quaint nowadays. Compared to all that, videogames have never embraced the controversy angle as a unified mission.

The Columbine Massacre of 1999 forced first-person shooters behind closed doors at that year's E3. This was the first time I felt a cold chill of responsibility to folks that lived in fear of content beyond their control, and I abhorred the media frenzy looking for more scapegoats. It did make me question more keenly the innovative *Soldier Of Fortune* that allowed bullets to maim as well as kill, but I was also mindful that only three years earlier I was laughing at the bloodlust in *Resident Evil*. Just over a decade later *Call Of Duty* headshots are entertaining our early teens and nobody seems to care.

Probably the Hot Coffee thing with *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* was the closest videogames have come to generating smart controversy, and you have to say without malice. Usually though, any controversy surrounding games has been based on insecurity borne of ignorance from onlookers.

In my experience, fanatical gamers have been at least as savvy as my metal brethren back in the day at distinguishing class from crass. When there's controversy surrounding your favourite pastime, you know it's being taken seriously instead of brushed aside.



Mortal Kombat in the early Nineties was just gory goofiness

Welcome back to the golden age



RETRO COLLECTIONS

Revisit the games, films, shows and hardware that defined entertainment for a generation

Also in this series



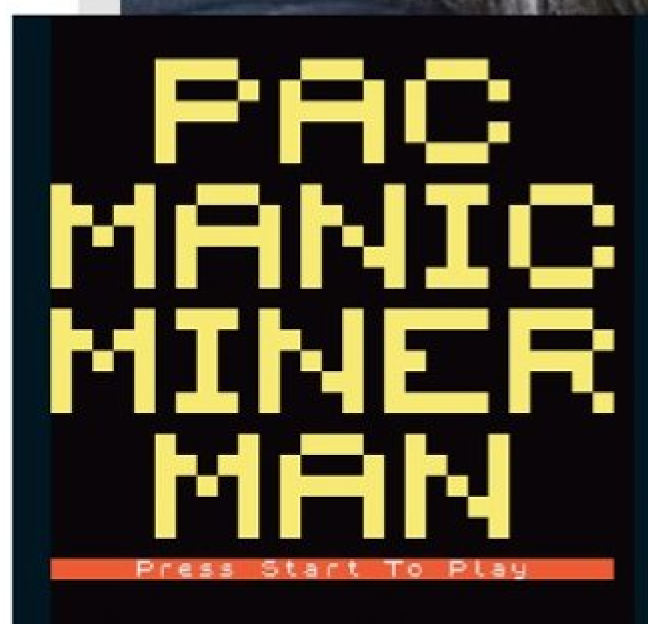
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A MOMENT WITH...
Jim Bagley

Every month we catch up with a classic developer. This issue we've been chatting with Jim Bagley about his exciting conversion of Manic Miner





» Sticking to the text style of *Manic Miner* without the graphic flourishes, the title screen is certainly nostalgic.

What is PacManicMinerMan?

Former Special FX Software programmer Jim Bagley has re-created Matthew Smith's iconic Spectrum game, *Manic Miner*, to run on the *Pac-Man* arcade hardware. In the Eighties and Nineties, Bagley worked on Spectrum conversions of *Cabal* and *Midnight Resistance*, and he also spun a better game out of *Hudson Hawk* than Hollywood did with the film. But it is *PacManicMinerMan* that is getting a lot of attention at the moment ahead of its unveiling at PlayExpo in Manchester in October.

Where did the idea for *PacManicMinerMan* come from?
It was about two months ago when I was doing some retro surfing and I came across a website run by Scott Lawrence, which explained programming for the *Pac-Man* arcade platform. During the early part of my career, I'd ported a few arcade games to home computers and consoles, so I felt it was time for me to write my first arcade game.

Was it difficult to do?
After finding the memory map for the *Pac-Man* hardware, already knowing Z80 fluently and having a Z80 assembler, it was easy enough to set up a simple program that altered a character location in video RAM to make sure it was working, and running my code.

How long has it taken you to create?
All in all, it took about a month of weekends with a couple of hours in some evenings thrown in. It was fairly straightforward to get Miner Willy moving around the screen with a jump and some collision.

What was the trickiest aspect of coding it?
Converting the 20 levels because the originals were 1K per level, and I only had 16KB available for all the programming and data. The screen on the *Pac-Man* hardware was also tricky because it is rotated 90 degrees and has 28x32 characters for the main game area and two character lines at the top and bottom for info like lives, level, scores and so on. So basically I had to trim four characters from the width of the Spectrum screens. This was made easier with the fact that all the *Manic Miner* screens have a wall on either side, so I only had to remove two character columns from the levels without altering the gameplay or the jumps.



» [Arcade] The *Pac-Man* hardware had 256 8x8-pixel characters, 64 16x16-pixel sprites and 16KB available.

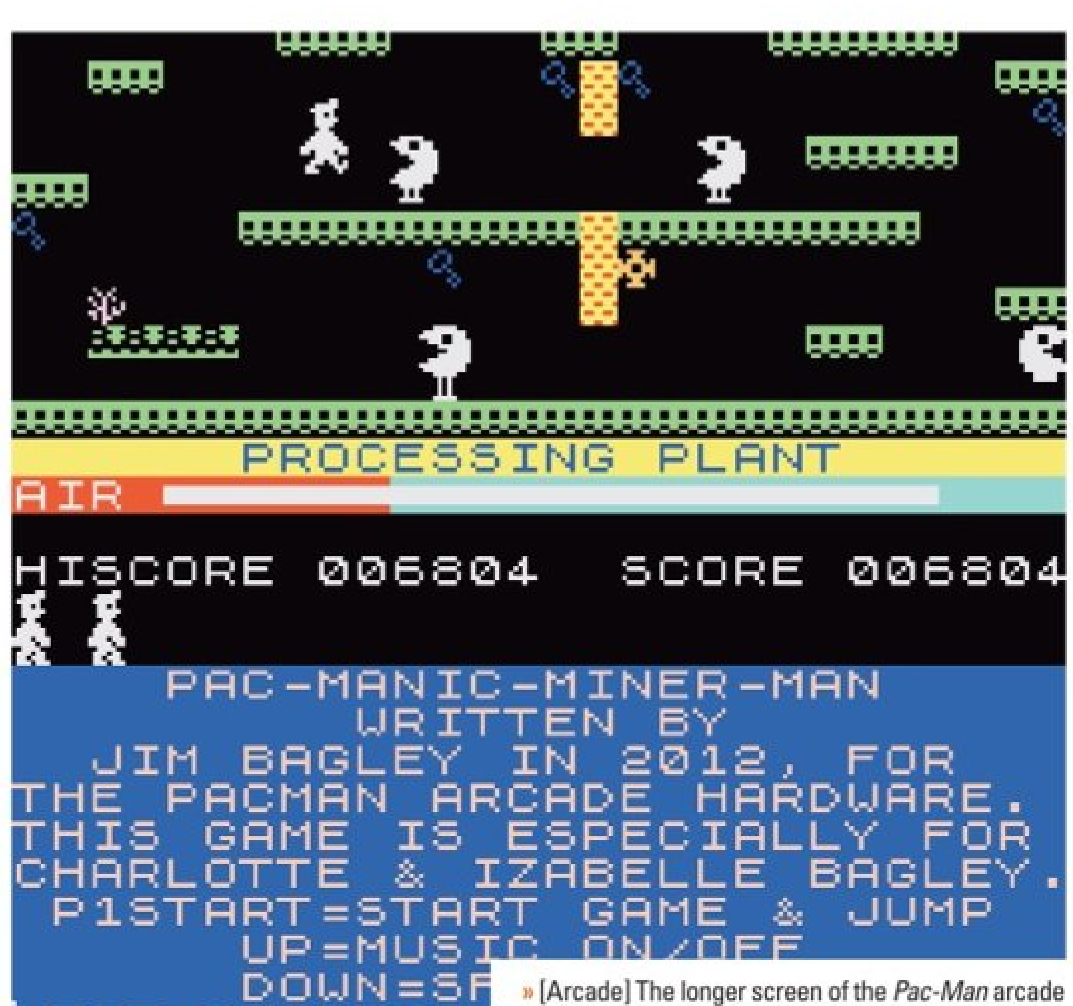
Are you planning to convert any other classic 8-bit home computer games to the *Pac-Man* board?
Yes, I quite enjoyed the challenge. It was kind of reminiscent of the early days when you're given a game to squeeze onto something that it wasn't designed to go on. I'm not sure which game I'll go for next; maybe *3D Monster Maze*, then *3D Deathrace* or *Zzoom*, as I think they would go well on the *Pac-Man* hardware.

How accurate would you say this version of *Manic Miner* is to the original game in terms of percentage?
It depends on how you want to deduct points for what. I'd probably say it's about 85 per cent close to the original. I was going to say 95 per cent, but I'm trying not to be biased! I even put the boot in when it's game over!

You continue to tinker away on older hardware. Why does it appeal to you still?
I love learning new things, even with old hardware. It has more memories and I love finding ways around limitations. It also keeps my brain active and thinking outside the box, which is always a good thing in the games industry. *

HOW SIMILAR ARE THE TWO VERSIONS?

- Some of the platforms are reduced in length where possible, to shrink the screens by two characters.
- But each room plays identically. All the same jumps and timed waits are there.
- The audio plays the same notes, just on a sound chip rather than manually done by the Z80.
- Since Jim had 64 sprite images as a hardware limitation, he had to reduce a lot of the sprite image sets by reusing some in place of others.
- The game runs faster. The movement is the same but sped up.
- Jim didn't have characters free to include the title screen and the piano keyboard, so it's just text.
- The player has five lives!



» [Arcade] The longer screen of the *Pac-Man* arcade hardware means the game has to have this blue block.

20 July – 16 August

retrodiary

>> A month of retro events both past and present



20 July 2011
■ The fantastically atmospheric puzzle platform game *Limbo*, developed by Playdead, is released on the PlayStation 3.



23 July 1984
■ Amsoft releases *Sultan's Maze* on the Amstrad CPC. Man, it was awful. *Sultan's Maze*, that is, not the CPC.



24 July 2005
■ Atari releases the Atari Flashback 2, a pre-programmed console containing 40 2600 games, including *Raid*, *Pitfall!* and *Centipede*.



25 July 1961
■ Clive Sinclair forms Sinclair Radionics and the march towards affordable home computing begins.



30 July 2004
■ *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* is released on the GameCube across Europe.



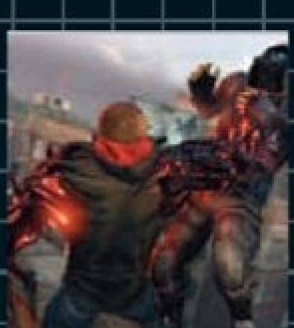
27 July 1990
■ Nintendo releases the falling tile-matching puzzle game *Dr Mario* on the NES and Game Boy. A bit like *Tetris* with prescription drugs.



26 July 1984
■ Gremlin Graphics releases *Wanted: Monty Mole* on the Spectrum, the first in a series of games featuring the subterranean mammalian fella.



26 July 1967
■ Tim Schafer, the game designer who created *Grim Fandango*, among others, is born.



30 July 2012
■ Activision's action-adventure game *Prototype 2* is due to receive its belated PC release in Europe.



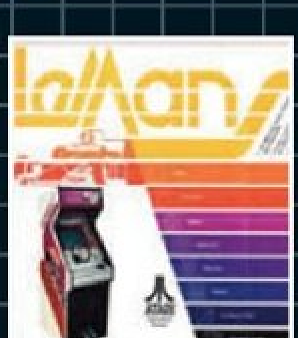
31 July 1966
■ Prolific Commodore 64 musician and composer Ben Daglish is born.



31 July 1980
■ Nintendo releases its fourth Game & Watch title, *Fire*. Bounce the people jumping from the burning building off your trampoline and into the ambulance.



31 July 2008
■ *Zero: Tsukihami no Kamen* (aka *Fatal Frame IV*), a survival horror to scare the bejesus out of Wii owners, is released, but only in Japan.



4 August 1975
■ *Le Mans*, an early arcade coin-op racing game from Atari, is released.



3 August 1984
■ Kevin Toms and his beard release *Football Manager* on the Commodore 64.



3 August 1977
■ Tandy releases the TRS-80 Model I home computer.



2-5 August 2012
■ QuakeCon is being held in Texas for four solid days of all things id Software.



9 August 1982
■ For just $595 you could buy what would become the bestselling home computer of all time – the newly released Commodore 64.



9 August 2002
■ Activision releases *Lost Kingdoms*, an unusual but rather pleasant card-based RPG adventure for Nintendo's GameCube.



11 August 1950
■ Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple Inc and creator of the first Apple computer, is born.



16 August 2012
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets

retro GAMER

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BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

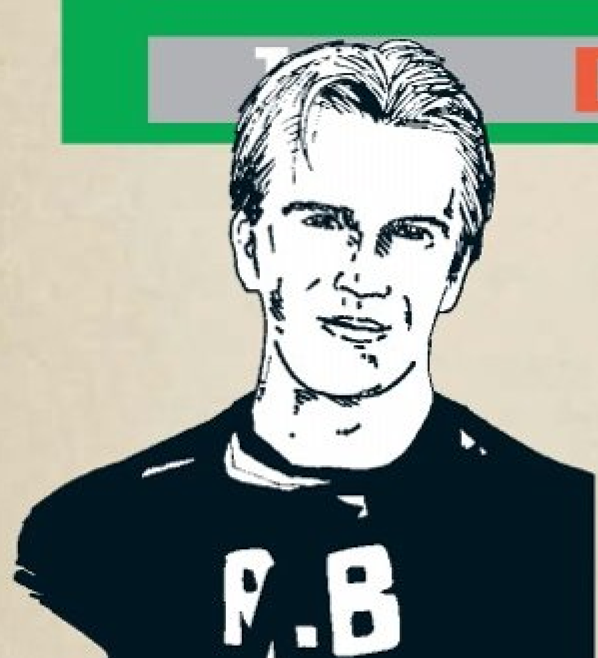




» [Intellivision] If you cross *Snake* with the light cycles from Tron you get this.



» [Arcade] Sega employs axonometric projection, hence the name, to create a 3D third-person shoot-'em-up in *Zaxxon*.



THE LATEST NEWS FROM JANUARY 1982

JANUARY 1982 – Qix arrives, Cracks appear, Game & Wristwatch revealed, Intellivision gets Snafu, Videopac attacks a satellite, Zaxxon hits arcades and Microsoft's Olympic Decathlon is off and running. Richard Burton sticks a javelin in his foot…

UK arcade coin-op fans were awaiting the release of Taito's latest creation, the simplistic but highly playable *Qix*. Pronounced 'kicks', the game sees you attempt to cordon off the screen in a fast paced *Etch-A-Sketch*-style game. You are required to gain 75 per cent of the gaming area before progressing to the next level and you did this by simply completing a closed shape. This shape then becomes solid and you are rewarded accordingly. Of course, it's not as easy as it sounds, as there are a number of different baddies after you. Despite its basic graphics, even for 1982, the playability was undoubted.

Do you suffer from *Cracks Of Doom*? Supersoft did, as it once again plundered literature for another Commodore PET adventure. After having *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* withdrawn from sale for not having a licensing agreement, it was fair to assume that *Cracks Of Doom*, which was a Tolkien-based adventure following the story of Frodo and his journey to Mordor, adhered to the same principle. It was written by *Hitchhiker*'s author, Bob Chappell, who later developed a Commodore 64 version of *Cracks of Doom*, although somewhere in the development process the game was renamed *Cracks Of Fire*, with place and character name changes.

With Nintendo's Game & Watch handhelds selling well and new titles released every few months, it came as no surprise to find others releasing similar products. However, the first of its kind to combine games with a proper wristwatch was about to be launched in the UK.

General Consumer Electric, the maker of the Vectrex console, had licensed Computer Games Ltd in the UK to release the first of three LCD digital watches containing several simplistic videogames. The watch and game combo was called *Game Time* and would contain the games *Firing Squad, Missile Strike, Alien Assault* and *Blast Away*. They were very simple games controlled by using just two buttons on the watch. Two further editions were released: *Sports Time* and *Arcade Time*, with all priced at £29.95.

There was more simple gaming pleasure with the release of *Snafu* by Mattel for the Intellivision console. What is essentially a cross between a game of *Snake* and Light Cycles, *Snafu* was another of those games that looked deceptively bland yet played well, particularly with two players. A nice touch that others games of this ilk didn't have was, on one of its variant games, the ability of moving diagonally. Another had random hazards appearing on screen. It had 16 different game variations and a choice of speed options. *Snafu* was, in a similar way to *Qix*, graphically uninspiring, but what they both had was boatloads of playability. You could *Snafu* it up for just £18.95.

Out this month in the UK for the Philips Videopac G7000 was *Satellite Attack*. It was a chunky yet colourful version of *Asteroids* with some interesting quirks, including a rather ingenious targeting system. Instead of blasting away at whatever is in your line of fire, you could control a dot on the outside of the gaming area, which then determines where your firepower goes. It might sound like a small thing, but being able to manoeuvre your ship away from obstacles while still blasting at asteroids was genius. *Satellite Attack* had only one minor quibble: the solitary life you have to cherish throughout the game.



» [Arcade] Divide and conquer was the name of the game. Gain 75 per cent of the screen and progress to the next level.

JANUARY 1982 NEWS

Mark Thatcher, son of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, reported missing somewhere in the Sahara during his participation of the Paris-Dakar Rally on 12 January. He was found three days later, having gone off course by 31 miles after suffering mechanical problems with his car.

11 January saw the first day of shooting for the third movie in the original *Star Wars* trilogy, *Return Of The Jedi*. *ROTJ* is notable for the death and redemption of Darth Vader/Anakin Skywalker as he battled the Emperor but also for the Ewoks, the cutesy and irritating inhabitants of Endor.

1 January brought a switch in regional television channel providers in the UK, with ATV in the Midlands replaced by Central Television, Westward replaced by TSW in the South West and Southern making way for TVS in the south of England. Ident collectors started rubbing their trousers vigorously…



» [Arcade] *Return Of The Jedi* was another smash hit for George Lucas, and Atari also released its own trilogy ender.

There was more TV news, with several new programmes debuting during January. 2 January saw *OTT* air for the first time. Short for *Over The Top*, it was an adult off-shoot of *Tiswas*, featuring many of the same crew such as Chris Tarrant and Lenny Henry. It flopped badly and was cancelled after one series.

Also debuting on 2 January was *No 73*, the live Saturday morning kids' TV show for ITV. Initially it aired only in the south, as most ITV regions persevered with the ailing *Tiswas*. It featured Sandy Toskvig and Neil Buchanan and ran for an impressive six years.

With 1982 being a World Cup year for football, it seemed odd that Microsoft should release an Apple II Olympic-themed game. Whether it was two years early or late, *Olympic Decathlon* set the tone for these types of games with frantic keyboard-bashing aplenty.

The full ten events were there, with the facility to allow six players to go against each other in gaining the biggest decathlon score. It also allowed pairs of players to go head-to-head, giving some in-game competition as well as maintaining your cumulative points score over the course of the decathlon. A nice touch was that the high-score table had real points scores from real decathletes, so you could gauge if you were in with a shout of a medal should Bruce Jenner, the decathlon world record holder at the time, be competing against you. Terrific fun, particularly with five of your mates around. Just make sure you have fingers of steel and reinforced keyboards…

Arcade dwellers were greeted with an isometric scrolling shooter classic this month with Sega's release of *Zaxxon*. The game looked different to anything else, with its isometric third-person viewpoint. As games go, the premise was as basic as they come: shoot everything, don't get killed and don't run out of fuel.

Zaxxon had a couple of other firsts to its name; it was the first videogame to use shadows for gameplay purposes rather than aesthetic beauty. The shadow of your ship could be used to gauge the ship's height, which was particularly useful when dodging barriers. It was also the first arcade coin-op game to be advertised on US television. *Zaxxon* proved to be an arcade hit among the coin-op fans. The well-regarded US magazine *Electronic Games*' annual videogame awards, which were some of the first awards ceremonies, had *Zaxxon* narrowly missing out as Arcade Game of the Year 1982 to Namco's *Bosconian*.

Naturally, many console and home computer versions followed, including a spiffy version for the ColecoVision, which itself narrowly missed out on being crowned Videogame of the Year for 1983, losing out to *Lady Bug*.



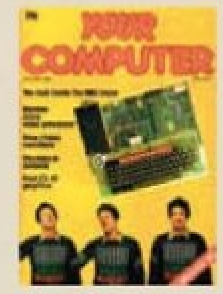
» [Apple II] *Olympic Decathlon* looks devoid of any enjoyment but quite the opposite was the case. A superb multiplayer game.



» [Philips Videopac] *Satellite Attack* played great despite looking like it was designed by a four-year-old.

THIS MONTH IN…

YOUR COMPUTER



YC had a big interview with Kenneth Baker MP, the first government minister to be responsible for information technology. He introduced the Microcomputers In Schools scheme, although his big hope was by the end of the year that 1 million television sets in the UK would have teletext facilities.



COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES



Always one to take the lead, *C&VG* highlighted possible toy trends for Christmas 1982. It predicted that Nintendo's Game & Watch handhelds would be sought after, as would the ongoing trend for chess computers. Would home computer chess software call checkmate on these bulky tabletop systems? Horsey takes king prawn…



ACTIVISIONS



The quarterly bulletin highlighting Activision's news revealed two new releases: *Grand Prix* and *Barnstorming*. Activision's president remarked on *Barnstorming* that "the graphics give you a you-are-there feeling, which takes you back to a long-gone era."



CHARTS

JANUARY 1982



ACORN ATOM

- Atom Chess (Bug-Byte)
- 3D Asteroids (Program Power)
- Space Invaders (Bug-Byte)
- Minefield (A & F Software)
- Invader Force (Program Power)



ZX81

- QS Defender (Quicksilva)
- Chess (Mikro-Gen)
- Star Trek (Silversoft)
- Centipede (DK'Tronics)
- QS Asteroids (Quicksilva)

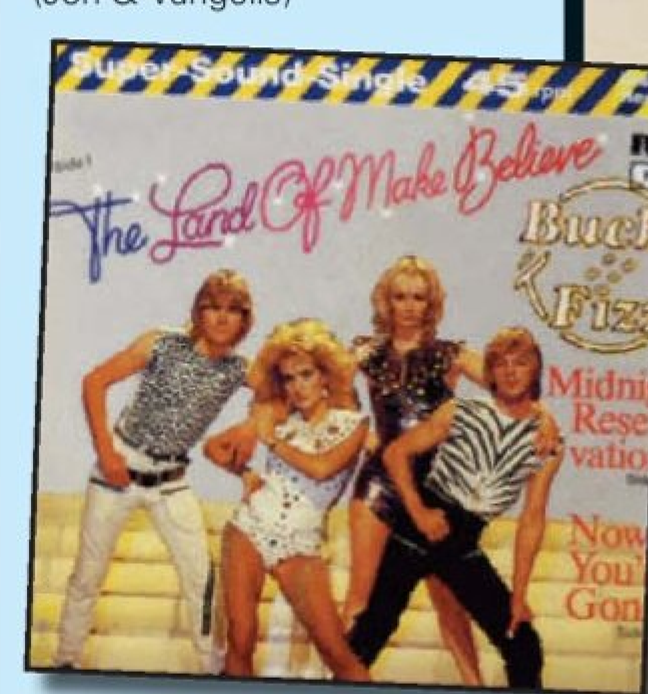


APPLE II

- Castle Wolfenstein (Muse)
- Raster Blaster (BudgeCo)
- Space Eggs (Sirius Software)
- Alien Typhoon (Star Craft)
- Gorgon (Sirius)

MUSIC

- The Land Of Make Believe (Bucks Fizz)
- Oh Julie (Shakin' Stevens)
- Don't You Want Me (Human League)
- Get Down On It (Kool & The Gang)
- I'll Find My Way Home (Jon & Vangelis)



BACK TO THE NINETIES



CHARTS



APRIL 1995

PC

1. Premier Manager 3 (Gremlin Interactive)
2. Defender Of The Earth (Virgin Interactive)
3. The Lion King (Virgin Interactive)
4. Aladdin (Virgin Interactive)
5. Master Of Magic (MicroProse)



» [Sega Saturn] The Japanese inlay artwork for *Panzer Dragoon* was drawn by the late French comic artist and illustrator Moebius.



APRIL 1995 – Swooning over Panzer Dragoon, Raiden goes blasting, Atari's Jaguar is going cheap, Casio goes Loopy, Sega goes Pico while Electronic Arts finally sorts out a rumble in the jungle. Richard Burton likes the smell of napalm in the morning…

THE LATEST NEWS FROM APRIL 1995

Already, *Panzer Dragoon* on the Sega Saturn was creating something of a buzz. The Japanese version had just been released, complete with lovely Moebius cover artwork, though the European version was still a few months away. Right from the off, you knew you were going to be playing something good. Its incredible seven-minute intro set the scene and immersed you into a mystical world.

Essentially, it was a rail shooter, albeit set on the back of a flying dragon tooled up with some hefty weaponry. The predetermined path still allowed for full 360 degree viewing of the terrain and targets, and despite criticisms that it was merely an *Afterburner* clone in a different skin, *Panzer Dragoon* would become a classic and much-revered title on the Saturn.

Another new Saturn title that promised a lot was *Virtual Hydlide*. The game was standard free-roaming RPG fodder that failed to impress. The graphics were disappointing, the AI engine was lacking in any actual AI, and the physics of the game were awful. Its one redeeming feature was that every game was different thanks to randomly generated levels. Japan and America saw the game released this month with the European release finally dragging its stiffening carcass into view a few days after Christmas.

Sony's new PlayStation saw the release of *Raiden*. No, not the character in *Metal Gear* or the *Mortal Kombat* dude with a wok on his head but the vertical scrolling shoot-'em-up converted from the successful Tecmo arcade coin-op of the same name. *Raiden* was uncomplicated gaming at its best. Despite being standard shoot-'em-up fare with the usual array of power-ups (including an enormous pink laser), it played superbly, and as arcade conversions go it was faultless. The PlayStation release also had the bonus of the 1993 sequel *Raiden 2* on the same disc, which was more of the same but tweaked with new terrain and even more power-ups. The two games became *The Raiden Project* and sold extremely well.

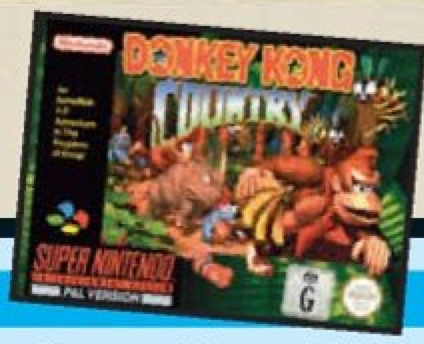
With sales of Atari's Jaguar console not setting the world on fire, despite some terrific games on the system, the console was about to receive a price-drop from £199.99 down to £149.99. Strangely, there still weren't many takers… Maybe it had something to do with the recent news that electrical retail giant Rumbelows was closing down, and all their console stock, including the Jaguar, was being priced to clear. You could pick up a Rumbelows' Jaguar for just shy of £80.



SNES owners who dreamt of connecting their consoles to a satellite to download gaming content were in luck as the release, in Japan at least, of the Satellaview was announced. The Satellaview, a satellite modem, connected your SNES to a satellite TV broadcast on the St. GIGA network during their daily Super Famicom Hour,

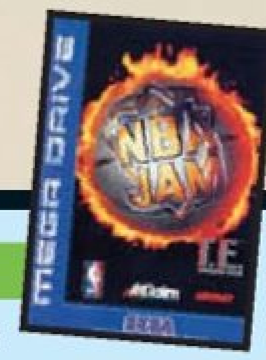


» [PlayStation] It was power-up central with this two game shoot-'em-up compilation featuring the first two *Raiden* games.



SNES

1. Donkey Kong Country (Nintendo)
2. The Lion King (Virgin Interactive)
3. Mortal Kombat (Acclaim)
4. Starwing (Nintendo)
5. Sensible Soccer (Sony)



MEGA DRIVE

1. NBA Jam Tournament Edition (Acclaim)
2. FIFA International Soccer '95 (Electronic Arts)
3. Cannon Fodder (Virgin Games)
4. Rugby World Cup (Electronic Arts)
5. PGA Tour Golf 3 (Electronic Arts)



MUSIC

1. Back For Good (Take That)
2. Don't Stop (Wiggle Wiggle) – (Outhere Brothers)
3. Two Can Play That Game (Bobby Brown)
4. U Sure Do (Strike)
5. Baby Baby (Corona)



which would broadcast magazines and games to be saved onto special rewritable cartridges. Some of the data from these broadcasts included early beta versions of forthcoming titles as well as full games released specifically for the Satellaview.

The broadcasting lasted over five years before being pulled, with the Satellaview discontinued shortly afterwards. At an initial cost of around £100 for the peripheral and further subscriptions to be paid on top, it was certainly a considered gaming purchase. However, at its peak, well over 100,000 subscribers were making use of it.

Casio, purveyor of digital watches and calculators, announced it was developing a console specifically targeting young female gamers. The Casio Loopy (aka the My Seal Computer SV-100) would have a built-in colour thermal printer for creating stickers from screenshots of games, most of which would be dressing up or dating games. The Loopy was pencilled in for an October release but would, like the Satellaview, be restricted to Japan.

Sega was also looking at specific target audiences and were ready to release its Sega Pico console in the UK after a delay of several months, despite having already been released in Japan and the US.

The system was aimed squarely at young gamers aged seven and under, with interactive educational storyware games controlled using a pen-like stylus. Although the library of titles for the Pico wasn't huge, there were interesting Pico-only releases which utilised some of Sega's famous characters. Games such as *Sonic The Hedgehog's Gameworld* and *Ecco Jr And The Great Ocean Treasure Hunt* both sold very well. The Sega Pico console itself had a mixed reaction, having sold extremely well in Japan but completely underwhelming the younger US gamers. The UK's reaction to the Pico would make for interesting viewing…

Sega also had the impending release of *Sonic Drift Racing 2*, the sequel to the adequate yet unimpressive original on the Game Gear. Thankfully, the new game addressed most of the problems the original suffered. Its crisply defined graphics were excellent, the track designs were well thought out and, above all, the gameplay was superb, particularly when competing against a friend. Link cable not included, folks… ker-ching!

Electronic Arts pulled its finger out and two years after the release of *Jungle Strike*, the sequel to *Desert Strike*, on the Mega Drive, EA finally released the SNES version. Why the wait? EA decided it wanted to rewrite the entire game from scratch rather than port it over. So, *Jungle Strike* for the SNES had enhanced graphics, better use of colour and was generally a more detailed and polished end product. Given that it took two years to release, that would surely be the minimum requirement.

Still, it played well and was worth the wait. It was also very lucrative and spawned three more *Strike* games; *Urban Strike*, *Soviet Strike* and *Nuclear Strike*. A fourth was proposed, *Future Strike*, but was never released, though it did later evolve in EA's *Future Cop: LAPD* on the PlayStation.



» Sadly, only ten games were ever released for the Casio Loopy.



» [Sega Saturn] *Virtual Hydlide* was a virtual bloody mess on most counts.

APRIL 1995 NEWS

19 April saw a massive truck bomb containing almost 5,000 pounds of explosives detonated just after 9am in Oklahoma City, demolishing the front of the nine-storey Alfred P Murrah Federal Building. A third of the building was destroyed and the bomb left a 30-foot crater in the street. Such was the size and force of the blast, it was heard over 55 miles away. It damaged over 320 buildings and killed 168 people.

The two men behind the terrorist attack were Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, former US Army soldiers, whose motivation for the attack was their anger of the Federal Government's handling of the Waco Siege two years earlier that resulted in the death of cult leader David Koresh and 75 members of the Branch Davidians. McVeigh was later found guilty in June 1997 and sentenced to death.

Disc jockey and television comedian Maurice Cole, better known as Kenny Everett, died on 4 April at the age of 50. The former Radio 1 DJ who made his name on pirate radio became famous for his anarchic and zany humour, incorporating a swath of characters including Sid Snot, Gizzard Puke, Marcel Wave and Cupid Stunt on the his television shows of the late Seventies/early Eighties.

At the age of 83, Ginger Rogers, the American dancer and actress who teamed up with Fred Astaire for several movies, sadly died on 25 April of a heart attack.



» Cupid Stunt always did things in the best possible taste…

THIS MONTH IN…



THE ONE AMIGA

The landmark Japanese animated film *Akira* was superb, with its dystopian future Tokyo setting, cyberpunkish overtones and fantastic motorbikes. On the other hand, published by ICE, *Akira* the videogame was one sloppy turd and arguably the worst movie tie-in game ever. It scored 2% playability and 6% overall… and that was generous…





PC GAMES

Continuing the theme of rubbish games was *PC Games*' review of *Space Ace* from ReadySoft, the successor to *Dragon's Lair*. Sadly for those wanting to actually play their games, *Space Ace* was just like it, in that it looked magnificent, like a living cartoon, but had virtually no discernible gameplay.





CPC POWER

The short-lived Euro-centric *CPC Power* magazine had an interesting retrospective feature on the development of *Jet Set Roland*. Amsoft planned to incorporate their Roland character into Matthew Smith's *Jet Set Willy* game, creating a CPC specific variation. It would make Smith money and give the *Roland* series longevity, but the plan was scrapped.



READER'S REVIVAL





RETROBATE PROFILE

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» JOINED: JANUARY 2012
» LOCATION: NOT GIVEN
» OCCUPATION: NOT GIVEN
» FAVE GAME SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM

Crusoe

BATTLING BOREDOM, LONELINESS AND BUGS

#52

» ZX SPECTRUM
» AUTOMATA
» 1984

Christmas 1986 and among my presents I find the *Automata 10 Pack Volume 1*, stuffed full of quite frankly rubbish games. But there was something about Automata that appealed to the teenage me. Something a little bit wild, something a little bit dangerous…

Anyway, obviously teenage me liked Mel Croucher's 'anarchic' sense of humour, with the games about drinking (*Pi-Eyed*), fire-starting (*Piromania*), the used car trade (*New Wheels John?*) and infringement of copyright (*Pi-Balled* and *Yakzee*). Turns out this was just the latest in a general trend of 'mature' humour, as there was a ZX81 compilation featuring games about zits, Hitler, vasectomies, smut, weeing and Ronald Reagan. Oh, how we coughed and spluttered with mirth.

I loved all this sort of rubbish, and was lucky enough to find, included on the *Automata 10 Pack Volume 1*, the gorgeous and wonderful *Crusoe*, one of the most bug-ridden games I have ever had the pleasure to play through. And I mean that sincerely.

I persisted with this game in the face of the most irritating of bugs, which included a frankly bizarre parser and the annoying archaic language ("I feele sicke") because I thought, deep in my heart, that it wasn't the game doing things wrong; it was me. If I wasn't getting anywhere it was because I was playing it badly and just hadn't really understood what I was supposed to do. And nothing that the game did could QUENCH that FIRE!

These graphics, tiny though they are, are vibrant with colour and are so like a real map as to make the island come alive in my mind. However many times those bloody spyders made me go 'Eeeeek!', or I discovered that I could see ghosts, or I died of exhaustion, foote rot or crocodiles, I would return to the island and wonder why, pray, I couldn't do anything on the Sabbath…

But it turns out that it wasn't me. 25 years on, and with the invaluable help of Battle Bunny over at World of Spectrum, I have finally mapped and completed the game. Battle Bunny has created a bug-fixed version, which is not the version I completed, and yet, somehow, without the bugs it is a lesser game.

And still I hear the island calling to me… *

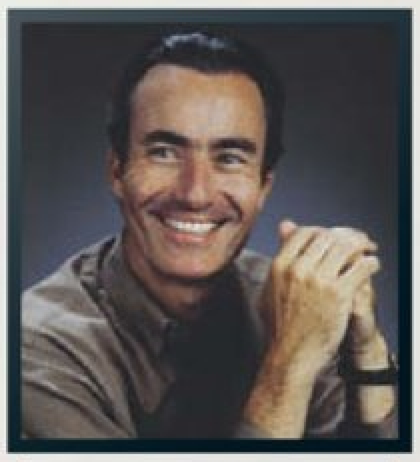
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THE ORIGIN OF ELECTRONIC ARTS

ELECTRONIC ARTS RECENTLY CELEBRATED ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY. TO MARK THIS MOMENTOUS OCCASION, WE CAUGHT UP WITH SEVERAL KEY PLAYERS, INCLUDING FOUNDER TRIP HAWKINS, TO FIND OUT HOW IT ALL STARTED



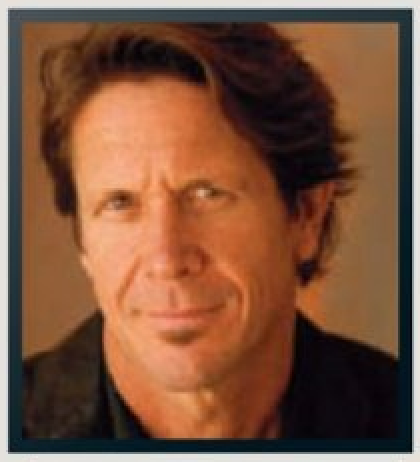
ELECTRONIC ARTS™



TRIP HAWKINS



CHRIS WILSON

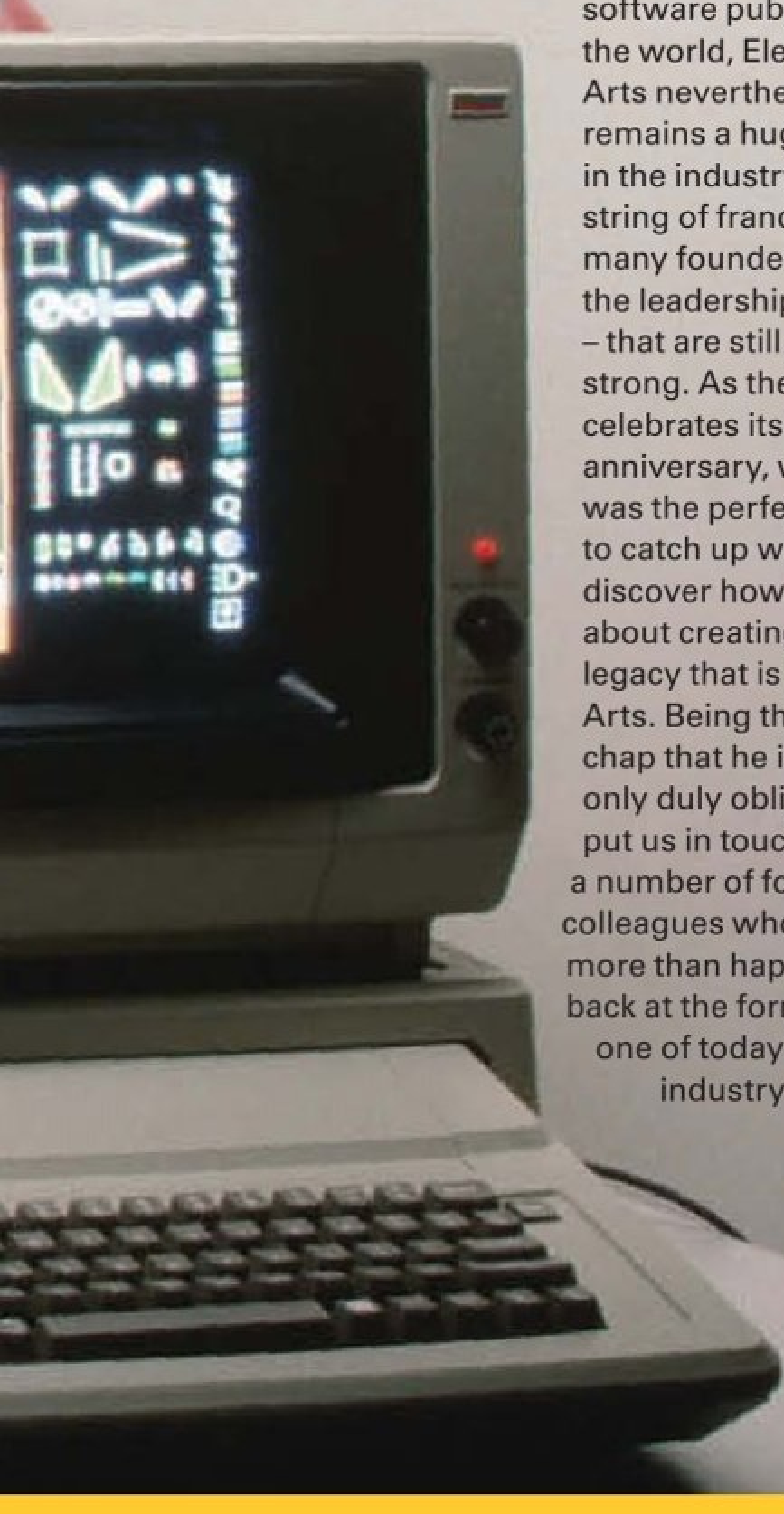


RANDY BREEN



BILL BUDGE

ELECTRONIC ARTS was created on big ideas. Trip Hawkins genuinely believed that game developers were as much artists as those found in any other creative profession, and he was determined to create a publishing house that reflected those beliefs. First formed in 1982, Electronic Arts quickly garnered a reputation for its distinctive box art based on the LPs that were popular at the time, and the fact that its games were innovative and, more importantly, fantastic fun to play. While it is no longer the biggest software publisher in the world, Electronic Arts nevertheless remains a huge player in the industry, with a string of franchises – many founded under the leadership of Trip – that are still going strong. As the company celebrates its 30th anniversary, we felt it was the perfect time to catch up with Trip to discover how he went about creating the legacy that is Electronic Arts. Being the friendly chap that he is, Trip not only duly obliged, but put us in touch with a number of former colleagues who were more than happy to look back at the forming of one of today's biggest industry players.



How did you land your job at EA and can you remember your first day?

Gregory Riker: I was working for Atari in the home computer division. A fellow I worked with at Atari, Monty Finefrock, had been recruited to EA a few months before as a manager. We met for lunch one weekend and he encouraged me to come to EA for an interview, which led to my joining the company as employee number 33, working for Monty. I do remember my first day very well. There weren't enough desks to go around, so I used the desk of the VP of operations, Eric Walter, who was travelling on a business trip. The office manager, Paulette Doudell, showed me the supply cabinet, where I could get pens and paper. Every single thing had to be signed for, down to a pencil. We were watching the pennies in the early days, but no one complained.

Chris Wilson: I was friends with Trip and he knew that I played a ton of games, so I joined as a tester. The first day was being in a small room with two other testers and about a dozen machines, and being introduced to the wonders of email for bug reporting.

Bill Budge: I was not an employee of EA at the start. I signed a contract with them to publish *Pinball Construction Set* in return for a royalty. I do remember my first day at EA, but it was in a tiny office they were borrowing from their VC firm.

Randy Breen: Completely by chance. I had just finished a six-year tour of duty in the US Navy submarine programme, returning near my home town in the San Francisco Bay Area. My plan was to take a summer job while getting ready to finish school in the fall. The first two years in the Navy were technical training in radio and computer electronics. I owned my own computer at the time as a hobby. Shortly after arrival, I had copies of my resume made at a copy shop. The guy making the copies happened to read my resume. He told me he knew someone looking to hire a person with my skills. Two weeks later I was working at EA. The company was less than 100 people at the time. The most memorable aspect of the first few days was the interviews. I was coming into the company for an entry-level technical job. I had two full days of interviews, seeing about 8-10 people each day. These ended with meeting both Tim Mott, the division VP, and Trip Hawkins. The joke at the time was Tim made my hiring manager, Rich Hilleman, call my submarine to verify previous employment. Some thought the idea of calling a submarine was absurd.

What was your first project at EA?

GR: I was hired to write software theft protection code, which was then known by the acronym STP, now more commonly known as DRM. I was an expert on the Atari 800 computer, so I also supported software artists that were developing games for the Atari platforms.

CW: The first title I tested was *Bard's Tale*. Little did I know that I would spend the next five years of my life working on *Bard's Tale I, II* and *III* on almost every system known to man.

RB: I moved from a technical support position to production in about six months. As an

A LOOK AT SOME OF EA'S DEFINING FRANCHISES

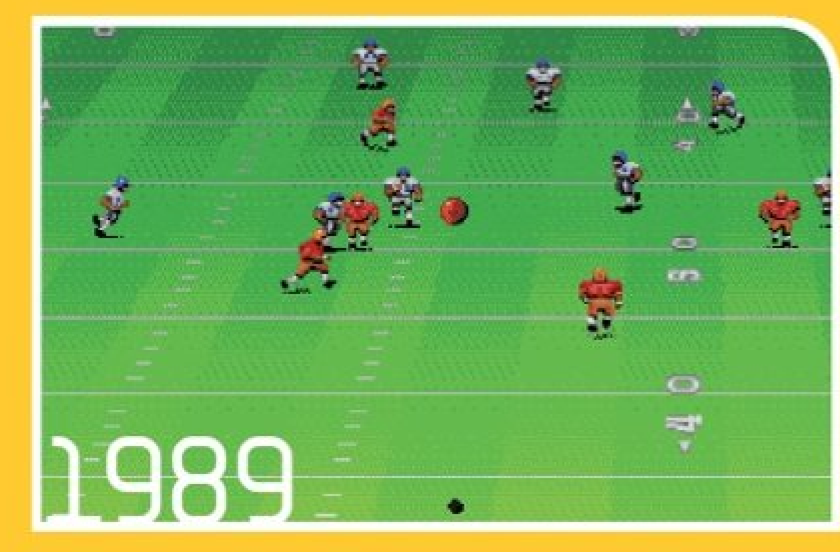


< PINBALL CONSTRUCTION SET

With its creator Bill Budge's name dwarfing the title and a pair of disembodied mannequin hands flanking a hovering mirrored ball, *PCS*'s Supertramp-esque box art makes clear EA's intent to create stars of its developers. One of the earliest ever examples of a construction game, it let users build their own tables via a simple pick-and-place interface. It sold over 300,000 copies, and its success spurred the release of other examples, including EA's construction set series encompassing the music, racing and adventure genres.

JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL >

Trip has said in the past that his friends often joke that the whole reason he set up Electronic Arts was to develop a football game; something the founder admits isn't entirely untruthful. Though simple compared to today's entries, the first *John Madden Football* was the most comprehensive American football game of its day, with plays directly from Madden's own playbook. Originally released for the Apple II, its popularity soared when a version was written for the Genesis, and the series became an MVP for EA and Sega's console in North America.





< FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER

As EA's sports titles grew in quality and number, the anticipation surrounding its first football title reached fever pitch. *FIFA International Soccer* was notable for its unique isometric perspective, detailed animations and lavish presentation – from team formations and coin tosses to crowd chants. Following a failed earlier attempt to create a football game running from the *Madden* engine, *FIFA* was conceived by a small team in Widnes before its production was moved to EA Canada, where the series remains to this day.

THE NEED FOR SPEED >

Applying the same level of realism and attention to detail to the racing genre as it did to sports titles, *The Need For Speed* was a petrolhead's dream. Debuting on the 3DO, and with involvement and association from California-based automotive magazine *Road & Track*, the game was praised for its stunning visuals, realistic car models and mechanics, and authentic engine sounds. The entire package was rounded off nicely with a healthy selection of modes and options, from detailed replays and exhilarating police pursuits to an excellent head-to-head mode.





< ROAD RASH

Partly inspired by the bike battles in *Akira*, Randy Breen headed up the development of this violent but technically slick Mega Drive racer, which saw thrill-seeking bikers battle it out in a series of illegal road races, which involved getting to the finish line first using fists, feet and whatever weapons they could lay their hands on. Spawning a number of sequels, including a great 3DO entry with gritty digitised graphics and an alternative rock soundtrack made up of established artists, we'd love for EA to give the series a *Hot Pursuit*-style revamp.

THE SIMS >

So big it was given its own division at EA, Will Wright's super-selling PC hit, *The Sims*, took the PC gaming world by storm, knocking *Myst* from the spot of bestselling PC game of all time. The popular homemaking simulator has grown exponentially since then, and this is in no small part thanks to its wide-reaching appeal and it being fed a constant diet of add-on packs and sequels that shine a light on all aspects of life and society, from attending university and vacationing to looking after pets. It's a huge and lucrative brand for EA.



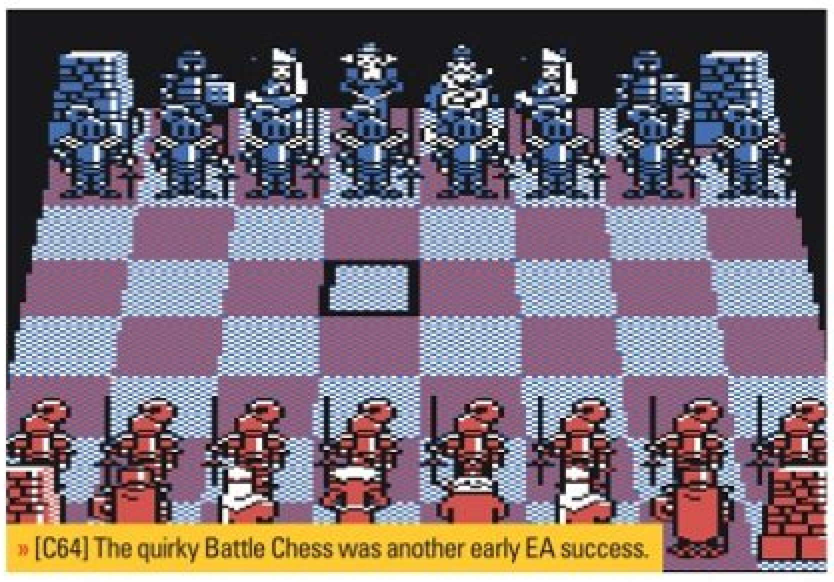
assistant producer I touched a lot of products, working on closing and helping developers sort out all the final details before shipping. The first few titles I was attached to were *Ferrari Formula One* with Rick Koenig, *PHM Pegasus* followed by *Strike Fleet* with Noah Falstein and Larry Holland of Lucasfilm Games, *Skyfox II* with Tom Casey, *Indy 500: The Simulation* with David Kaemmer and Omar Kudari of Papyrus Design, and the first versions of *Madden Football*.

What was the culture of Electronic Arts like?

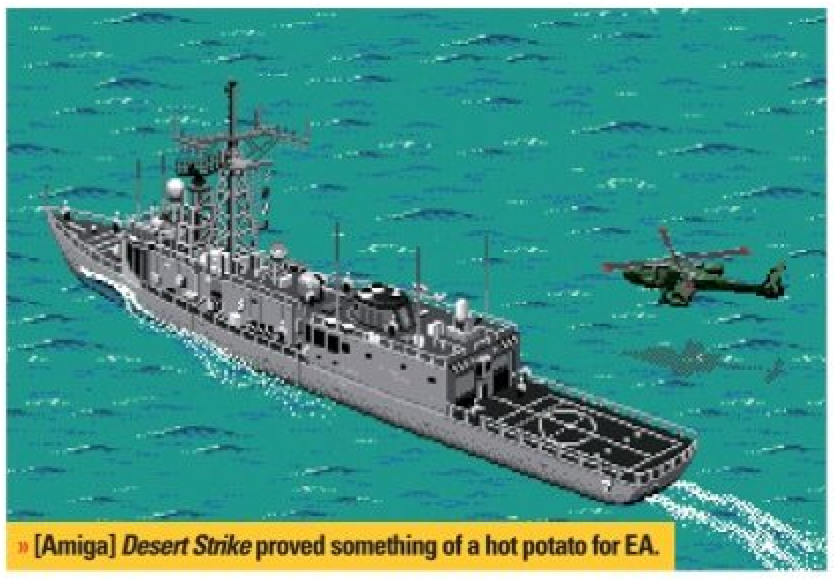
GR: In a word, exhilarating. I felt like I was surrounded by a team of very smart, very committed, very energetic people. I had never worked in an atmosphere of that intensity. It was incredible. Every Friday afternoon at 4:30 we'd have a company meeting, and we'd have a chance to hear what our peers had accomplished during the past week. I always went home feeling recharged for the coming week.

RB: There was a real drive and vision in the company, a great deal of focus on nurturing the company culture. The culture centred around encouraging participation and democratising process, on creating products that met the market. As a by-product of the culture, I witnessed vigorous, open debate over all aspects of the business. This attitude was elevated to an art form by my immediate co-workers – Rich Hilleman, Scott Cronce, Paul Grace and Marjorie Martin – who made up the simulations division. As challenging as that environment could be, it led to exposure of how decisions were made. It also created a sense of ownership in the company. For many years there was a real concern over the potential of the company culture changing – which it eventually did, but perhaps delayed considerably because of this focus.

CW: It was awesome. Work hard, play hard, and a great sense of team and camaraderie. A bunch of people just interested in trying to get the best games made that they could.



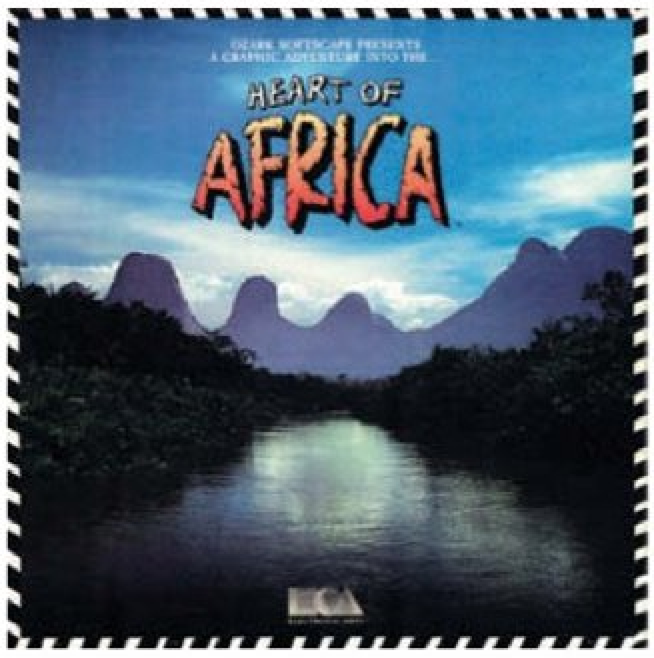
» [C64] The quirky Battle Chess was another early EA success.

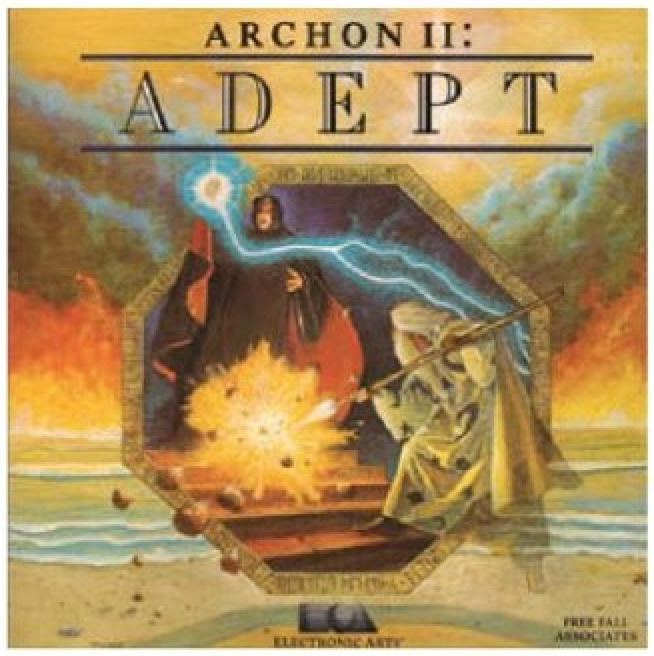


» [Amiga] *Desert Strike* proved something of a hot potato for EA.









Trip Hawkins: I understood the need to get agreement about core values and to promulgate them with the selection, training and management practices that would keep the culture alive and well. I had studied organisational culture in college and business school and I was very deliberate about creating EA's culture. I had done some similar things at Apple where the founders asked me to lead a project to define and promote Apple's culture. I believe in using a memorable acronym, where each letter stands for a key theme in the culture. For EA it was ACTION, which stood for achievement, customer satisfaction, teamwork, integrity, ownership, now. Besides the content of the culture you need specific business practices to implement and maintain it. I interviewed every new hire, I had weekly company meetings, I purposely disclosed a tremendous amount of information to all employees. I gave out weekly, quarterly and annual awards for culture leaders, and with the help of my more creative and amusing managers I brought a lot of humour and entertainment into the operating style of EA.

What's your best memory of EA?

GR: Being recognised by Trip at the company Christmas party as employee of the year for my work developing tools for the Amiga.

TH: I was quite moved at our second Software Artist Symposium when, after I had given out a bunch of awards to our top artists, they and the rest of the audience gave me a beaming, spontaneous and unexpected standing ovation that was quite heartfelt. I knew at that moment that my dream of helping these great, creative innovators was going to come true and make a ding in the universe, that what I had led all these people to do was going to matter to the world.

BB: Going on the introductory 'Bill Budge artist tour' with Bing Gordon. It was to promote the idea of game developers as 'rock stars'. We went to a bunch of computer stores around the US and it was an eye-opening experience. I even got to work in retail at a store in Boston.

How important was the focus on making developers the star of the games at EA?

RB: The EA 'artist model' was the original publishing vision the company was built on, established before I arrived. It continued through the Eighties. The model started to change with hybrid products, built partially in-house and partially external like *Budokan* by Ray Tobey and Michael Kosaka and *688 Attack Sub* by John Ratcliff, Paul Grace and myself. As the company moved toward console products in the Nineties, EA started building games on spec or internally. *Road Rash* for the Genesis was one of the earliest games built entirely in-house. Dan Geisler, Walt Stein and my name appeared on the title, but by that time EA had moved away from promoting authors. By the mid-Nineties, marketing focused on branding the company and the franchises.

BB: I think EA made a strong effort at the start with the first group of developers. They featured us in ads and sent me around the country on that tour. They arranged lots of interviews for me through their PR agency, Regis McKenna.

> "I HAD NEVER WORKED IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF THAT INTENSITY. IT WAS INCREDIBLE"

TH: It mattered a great deal to me and, of course, the artists loved it. However, I would have to say that the public, the consumers, didn't care about it as much as they have for many other art forms.

How important was the focus on moving from computers to consoles for EA?

GR: That actually occurred just as I was leaving the company. We had started to distribute games for the Nintendo, and I was in charge of reverse-engineering the Sega Genesis OS so that we could build our own cartridges without paying Sega a licensing fee. But all of the major cartridge development came after I left EA, so I wasn't really part of that transition.

CW: It was very important. Starting with the Sega Genesis, it allowed for tremendous growth in revenue.

RB: There was a real internal struggle moving to console. In part due to the collapse of the Atari market in the mid-Eighties. For the game industry it was the equivalent of the internet bubble, and the economic model – both from a licensing and cost of goods standpoint – looked doomed. But the CD took longer than anyone thought to catch on and the PCs never migrated out of the home office. Ultimately the shift to console in the early Nineties was the driver for EA's growth.

TH: It was an enormous shift that was resisted by many employees and developers. They preferred the PC because it had more memory and read-write storage. But it cost $1,000 and a Sega Genesis was $189, and had two joysticks and people could play together. There were really key people, including technologists like Greg Riker, who preferred to leave to go to somewhat more 'computer science research' environments like Microsoft than to make simpler games for Sega.

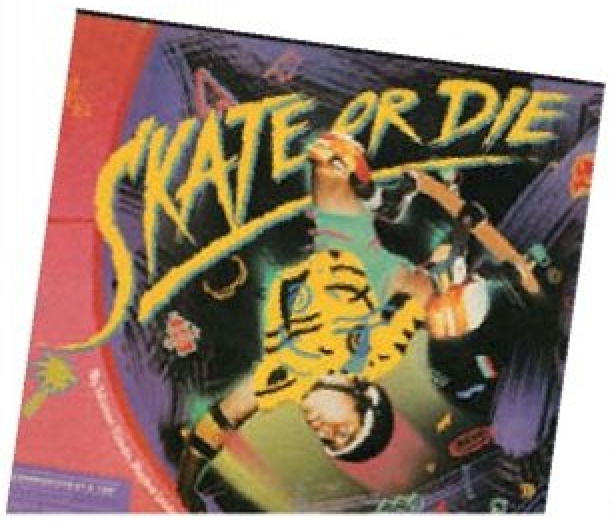
How important were the various sports licences to EA?

CW: Can you say *Madden*? EA had strong titles on computers, but the consoles were where sports titles really shine. They have done an amazing job maintaining those franchises over the decades.

What's your favourite EA franchise and why?

RB: I'm obviously biased. I pitched *Road Rash* after being asked to come up with an idea for a racing title on the Genesis. The first product was a challenge and there was doubt internally at the midway point that we could pull it off. We









pressed on, solved the problems. The first version was a hit. We went on to build three more versions for the Genesis, then the 3DO and PlayStation versions, then PlayStation 2. All told, I managed the franchise for nearly ten years.

BB: *The Sims*. It's the kind of game I think is very important in showing people what videogames can become.

TH: *Madden*, of course, because of my deeply personal role in it. But my favourite individual games are *MULE*, *One On One* and *Twisted* – made by 3DO and published by EA. I basically designed all of *One On One* and *Madden*, had the concept and key design elements for *Twisted*, and designed the core economic principles and how they worked in *MULE*, where I even wrote the game manual. I was also producer and executive producer on many games I didn't take credit for; I thought I got enough attention as the founder and CEO. But I played such a significant role with *Madden*, which became known as 'Trip's folly', that it was a rare case where I did get a credit on the box. *Twisted* was another one.

How important was Trip Hawkins to the success of Electronic Arts?

GR: Trip was the early catalyst and visionary that sparked the magic. There were many, many smart people who made the company happen, but without Trip I don't think they would have come together at a company like EA.

RB: Trip was inspired in pre-IPO EA. He was the champion of EA culture and demonstrated great leadership. He was also surrounded by an incredibly strong group that led the company – Larry Probst, Tim Mott, Bing Gordon, Stewart Bonn, Mark Lewis to name a few. Collectively, they helped correct, guide and propagate the EA vision and steer the company.

What was the relationship like between internal staff and freelancers?

CW: I think it was good. EA really tried to establish the developers as artists in the public's mind and managed to continue to work with many of the same people for a long time. There were projects that went on for years before they were ever released because people wanted to get it right. *Madden* and *Star Flight* come to mind as examples of that.



» [Amiga] Bullfrog became massively important to EA.

TH: It was awesome, because our employees believed the core vision and mission and were sincerely there to help the artists, and help they did! Early inside engineers like David Maynard and Steve Hayes, and the first people I hired and called 'producers', including Joe Ybarra, Stewart Bonn, Dave Evans and Pat Marriott, had really big hearts and gave everything they had to help early artists.

BB: Very friendly from what I experienced. I made many friends at EA when I freelanced that I keep in touch with today.

What made you decide to leave EA?

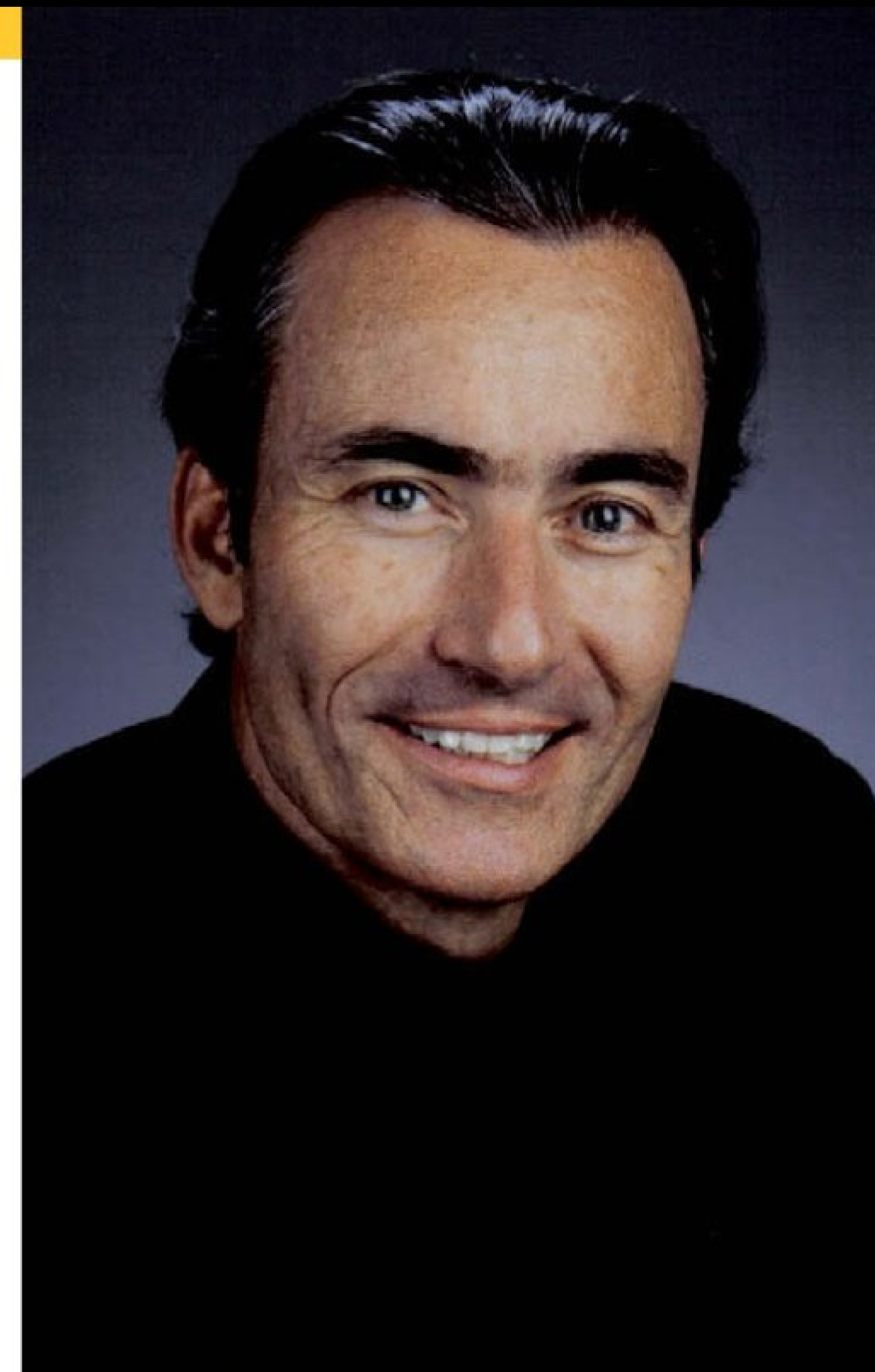
GR: I was personally more interested in developing knowledge tools rather than entertainment products. I was recruited by Microsoft to lead development of their early CD-ROM titles, including Encarta and Microsoft Bookshelf. I loved EA, but I wasn't a gamer.

RB: From the earliest days, I was a portfolio manager, which gave me the benefit of touching many products. At first in a small way, helping others refine their execution and get their product out the door. Next, involved in planning from start to finish. Later as a designer and producer of my own products. Finally as an executive producer managing other producers and teams. Eventually EA was more interested in growing already successful franchises and felt that entertainment titles could come to market annually the same way sports products did. This created pressure to focus more exclusively on a single franchise. I argued that the company needed to continue to explore original content, bring product to a market segment annually but cycle each entertainment franchise every two to three years to keep them fresh. It was very difficult to leave a successful company and a franchise I established, but these strategies could not co-exist.

Why do you think EA remains such a prominent publisher today?

CW: They have some strong brands that they keep relevant while still developing new IP, and they have always been pretty good at being invested in new platforms. As long as they keep the focus on the quality, they will be around for a long, long time.

BB: They were able to adapt to the increasing complexity of game development. In other words, they can put together and manage large teams of developers.



TRIP'S JOURNEY

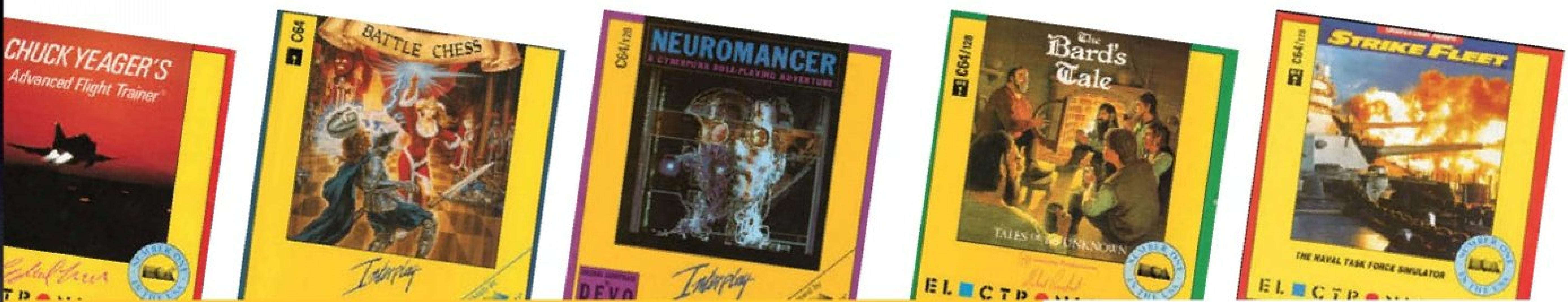
The EA founder discusses his aims for Electronic Arts and where his love of sports games originates

You mentioned previously that you had the idea of forming EA years before it happened. Why did it take so long?

I had the idea to make computer games before anyone could get a computer. Even when you could get a computer, they cost more than $1,000 and didn't have any way to load a game. For example, I saw my first computer kit in 1971, but it cost several thousand dollars and was an elite hobby kit that didn't even have a display. By 1975 I had pegged that I would found the company in 1982, on the belief that there would be enough computing devices in homes by that time. There were, and I did.

What were your aims when you first set up Electronic Arts?

I love to play games and I thought everyone in the world should be playing videogames. I wanted to bring the best games to the world. I had wanted to found my own game company for many years, but I had decided that it needed to be built around a big idea. I got the big idea in 1981 that software was an art form and that game developers were artists that needed a unique publisher that understood this fact. Prior to my founding of EA, everyone just thought of software as a form of engineering. My concept of the software artist was a key germination point, which led me to further study Hollywood media to figure out which business





principles to bring to the development and distribution of game software. It all fell into place rather quickly after that, with major ideas like marketing the game in a record album, telling the public about the artists, making great tools for the artists, and pioneering the direct distribution of games into retail shops. No computer game companies were doing any of that at that time.

Where did the idea of basing games around sport licences originate?

That was one of my big dreams, and an easy extension from my software artist theme, once I began to study how to make what I called the New Hollywood. I grew up playing what I consider to be the predecessor to EA Sports, which was card and dice games like Strat-O-Matic and APBA that had cards for real athletes with dice and charts to allow you to perform the function of the computer yourself. But that alienated players who wanted it to be much simpler in the same way that we have a bigger audience for RPGs and MMOs than there ever was for *D&D*. I wanted to have the simulation realism of Strat-O-Matic, and of course all the strategy, but with graphics and simple UI like operating a TV.

Many publishers and developers struggled through the transition from 2D to 3D gaming. How did EA manage it?

From the very beginning, I knew we were in a technology industry – I had been at Apple for four years. I knew we needed to have technologists and a technology strategy including development tools – in my head it was the equivalent of providing what would have been a recording studio and instruments to a band, or a sound stage and cameras to a filmmaker. So in the early days I hired Tim Mott, a great technologist and executive, whom I had the pleasure of working with for nine years. I was always craving more realism and authenticity in our games, believing it to be key to expanding the market and making user interfaces more mass-market, as we had done at Apple. So I pounced on Ray Tobey's fake 3D on the Apple II, which became a hit called *Skyfox*, and was the first nutcase to jump on the Amiga bandwagon, which became our first opportunity to attack 3D. We were always way ahead of most others, except for the rare exception like the guy that did the *Microsoft Flight Simulator*, and we would make early bets with new, young developers like Dynamix and Ned Lerner that were early to use 3D.

What did you learn from your time at EA that you took to The 3DO Company?

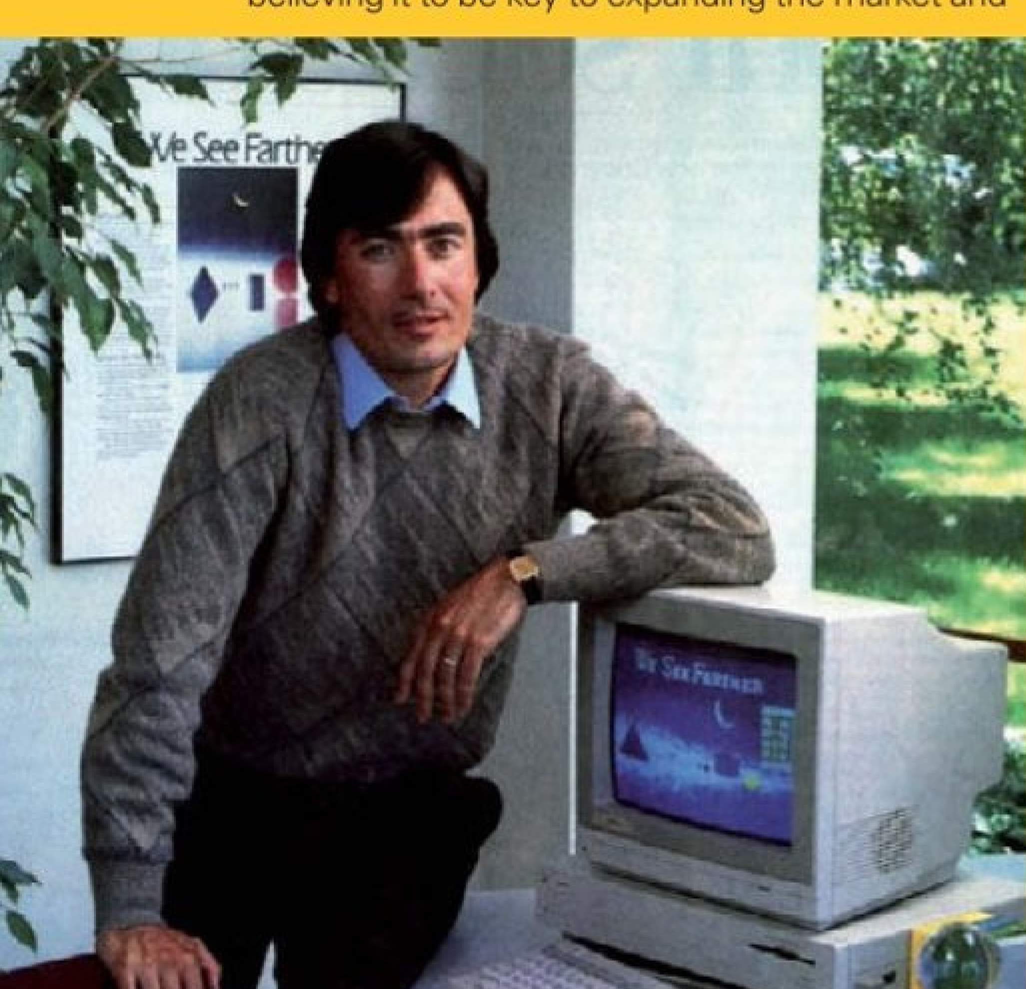
Be bold, go big or go home, create a strong organisational culture, hire the best people. Unfortunately, the 3DO mission was flawed and many of the ideas were ahead of their time.

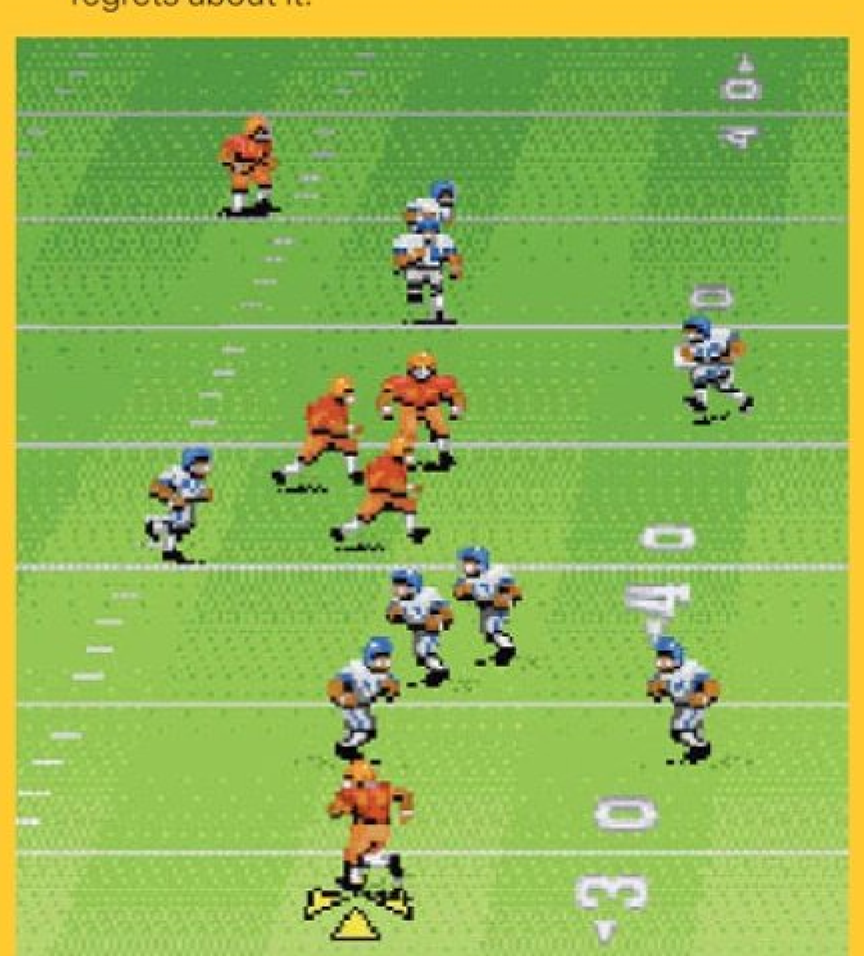
What is it that you love about videogames?

Interactive media like games are the most engaging and are the only one that is proven to increase intelligence. We learn by doing, and playing is simulation, and a computer simulation is the most advanced. The world that grew up around me addicted to television needed to interact and play. As an artist, you must trust yourself and ignore the critics. When I was at Harvard, an important professor told me to "stop wasting your time monkeying around with games". But I believed that the world needed computer games and nobody ever shook me from my passion.

Are you proud of the gaming legacy you've created in Electronic Arts and beyond?

The most important thing to me is the way I helped so many people, both inside and outside the industry. They're thanking me all the time and it means the world. Unlike most people, I didn't just make a pile of money and retire. I stayed in it and kept giving to the causes of the industry, and I gave it all, and have no regrets about it.





» [Mega Drive] *Madden* remains Trip's favourite EA series.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

Electronic Arts was founded by Trip Hawkins in 1982. It was originally called Amazin' Games.

The first EA game to ever sell 1 million copies was *Music Construction Set*.

One of Trip's first ever computer games was a football simulation game he wrote for the PDP-11 in 1973.

***John Madden Football* was first released for the Apple II in 1989 before being ported to the Genesis and Super Nintendo in 1990.**

After publishing many of the studio's games – including *Populous, Powermonger* and *Flood* – EA acquired Bullfrog in 1995.

Distinctive Software (EA Canada) was purchased by EA in 1991 for a reputed $11 million.

In 1998, EA signed Tiger Woods to its *PGA Tour Golf* series, a relationship that continues today.

EA secured the *James Bond* licence in 1999, taking it away from Rare and making the amazingly bland *Tomorrow Never Dies*.

The 3DO Interactive Multiplayer was released in 1993. The following year Trip stepped down as CEO of EA, but remained as chairman, to focus on The 3DO Company.

***The Sims* has sold over 16 million copies, making it the bestselling PC game ever. The franchise as a whole has topped 150 million.**

To date there have been 26 *Madden NFL* games, counting the console rewrite of the first Apple II title.

In 1990 EA became a publicly traded company, and within only one trading year its share price had risen from $8 to $37.



» [Apple II] *Pinball Construction Set* was an early EA release.

30 Years of EA

ELECTRONIC ARTS HAS RELEASED A MASSIVE NUMBER OF GAMES SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1982. WE'VE TRAWLED THROUGH THE PAST THREE DECADES TO BRING YOU 30 GEMS – ONE FOR EACH YEAR OF THE COMPANY'S HISTORY

1982

AXIS ASSASSIN

DEVELOPER: JOHN FIELD

1982 was a relatively quiet year for EA, with the vast majority of its games rolling out in 1983. John Field's *Axis Assassin* is one of EA's first released for various 8-bit home computers, being a slick clone of Dave Theurer's *Tempest*. Despite the fact that it's down as having a 1982 copyright, Trip revealed just as we were going to press that it wasn't actually released until 1983.

1983



ARCHON: THE LIGHT AND THE DARK

DEVELOPER:
FREE FALL ASSOCIATES

EA's early releases were often praised for their creativity, and *Archon* was no different. On the surface it appears to be little more than a fantasy version of chess, but it's actually so much more, with pieces fighting in real-time.

1984



MUSIC CONSTRUCTION SET

DEVELOPER:
WILL HARVEY

EA wasn't just interested in making games, with Will Harvey's *Music Construction Set* being an example of the entertainment software that Trip was keen on delivering. Originally created for the Apple II, it was ported to numerous 8-bit systems and eventually the ST.

1985



MAIL ORDER MONSTERS

DEVELOPER:
PAUL REICHE III,
EVAN ROBINSON,
NICKY ROBINSON

This is another great example of EA's eye for an innovative product. It riffs heavily on *Archon* but includes capture the flag elements and the ability to customise your monsters. A clever strategy game and a lot of fun.

1986

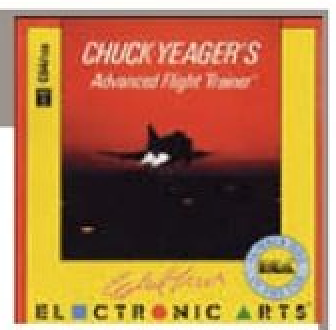


STARFLIGHT

DEVELOPER:
BINARY SYSTEMS

Full of self-aware humour and a loving tribute to the likes of *Star Trek*, *Starflight* was an excellent space exploration game that mixed RPG elements with fierce combat, deep strategy and an engaging story. Interestingly, it was first developed for the Tandy and DOS.

1987



CHUCK YEAGER'S ADVANCED FLIGHT TRAINER

DEVELOPER:
NED LEARNER

This stunning flight sim allowed you to control 14 different aircraft. Humanised by Yeager's pithy comments, it performed extremely well, resulting in two sequels.

1988

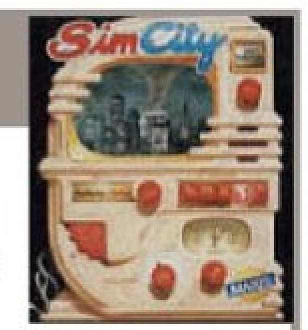


WASTELAND

DEVELOPER:
INTERPLAY PRODUCTIONS

With its sequel creating buzz on Kickstarter, it's easy to forget just how innovative Interplay's original game was. Inspired by tabletop RPGs, it's one of the earliest examples of a persistent game world and was another EA game that started life on the Apple II.

1989

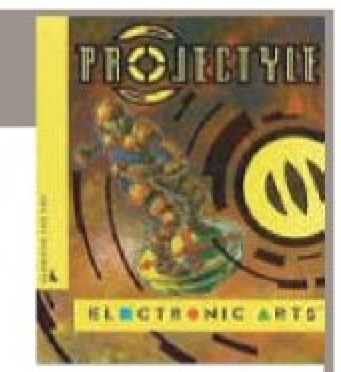


SIMCITY

DEVELOPER: MAXIS

Building a city sounds like the most boring thing in the world, but Will Wright managed to turn the concept into an amazingly comprehensive strategy game. *SimCity*'s immense commercial and critical success meant it was ported to a huge number of systems and consoles, and it will be receiving a reboot early next year.

1990

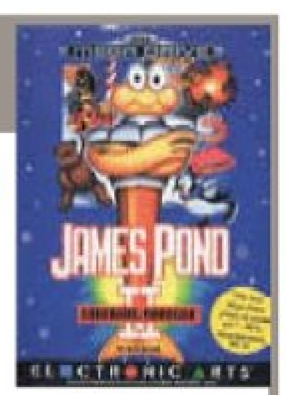


PROJECTYLE

DEVELOPER:
ELDRITCH THE CAT

Projectyle was a fun futuristic sports game that played like a cross between *Speedball* and air hockey. It's amazingly fast and frantic and becomes even better when played against two human opponents, as you're constantly trying to outdo and outscore each other.

1991

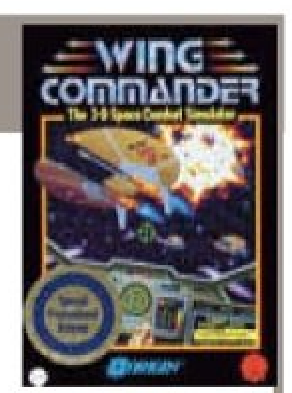


JAMES POND 2: CODENAME ROBOCOD

DEVELOPER:
MILLENNIUM INTERACTIVE

After lampooning *James Bond*, Chris Sorrell based his fun fishy sequel on *RoboCop*. James Pond now sported a stretchable robotic body, while the setting of Santa's toy factory allowed for some nuttily designed levels.

1992

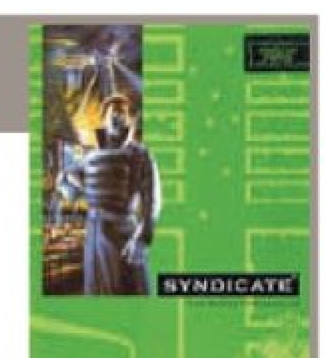


WING COMMANDER

DEVELOPER:
ORIGIN SYSTEMS

Epic is the best way to describe *Wing Commander*. Heavily inspired by *Star Wars* and other popular sci-fi films, the developer was eventually rewarded when Mark Hamill, Luke Skywalker himself, starred in the FMV-based sequels.

1993

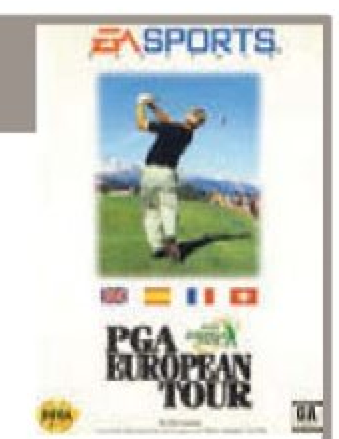


SYNDICATE

DEVELOPER:
BULLFROG

Peter Molyneux's studio, Bullfrog, figured heavily in EA's success during the 16-bit years. Its brilliant futuristic action strategy game, set in a world of warring corporations, was no exception, with it recently receiving a reboot courtesy of Starbreeze Studios.

1994



PGA EUROPEAN TOUR

DEVELOPER:
POLYGON GAMES

Electronic Arts had a knack for creating great sports games. A huge improvement over *Leaderboard*, the *PGA Tour Golf* series has gone on to become synonymous with videogame golf.

1995

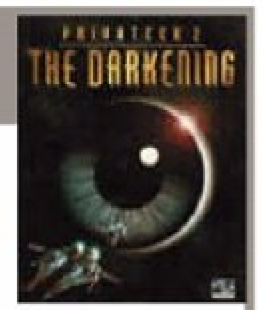


IMMERCENARY

DEVELOPER:
5 MILES OUT

EA had a lot invested in the 3DO, delivering a wide range of genuinely great games for it. One of its most imaginative was *Immercenary*, which featured an innovative mechanic where you gained strength from defeating more powerful opponents.

1996

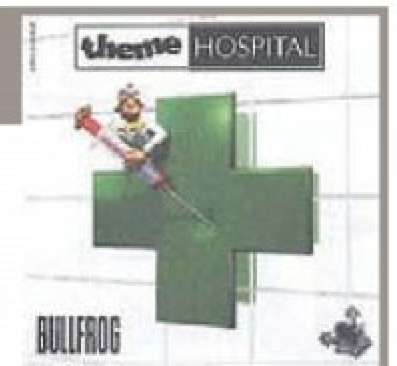


PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING

DEVELOPER: ERIN ROBERTS

While not the greatest game in the *Wing Commander* canon, *Privateer* is worth mentioning here because it was so epic. While it featured similar mechanics to past games, it was boosted by a ridiculously starry cast that included Christopher Walken, John Hurt, Brian Blessed and Clive Owen.

1997

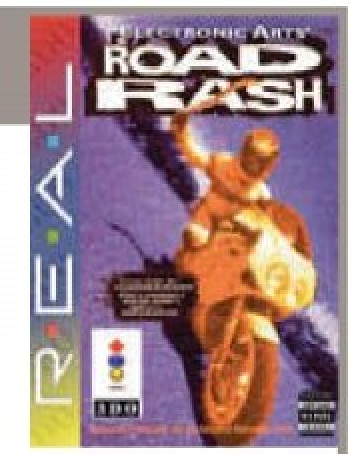


THEME HOSPITAL

DEVELOPER: BULLFROG

After finding runaway success with *Theme Park*, Bullfrog applied the same template to running a hospital. The end result was another success, blending strategy and a typically British sense of humour. We'd love a new update.

1998

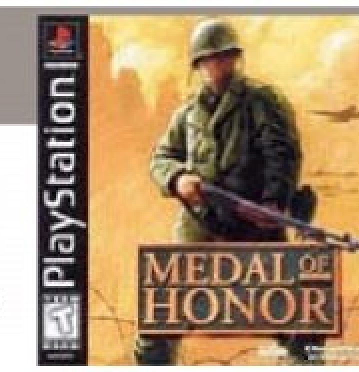


ROAD RASH

DEVELOPER: MONKEY DO PRODUCTIONS

The 3DO treatment of the hit Mega Drive game was superb, thanks to excellent visuals, a storming licensed soundtrack and the same great gameplay that had appeared in the 16-bit game.

1999

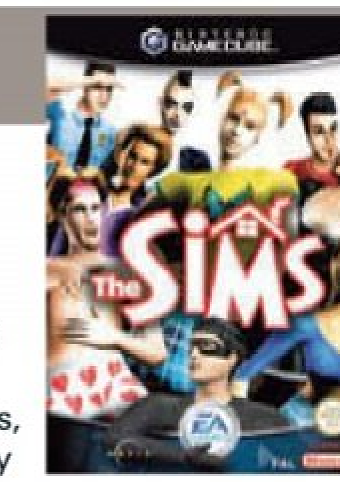


MEDAL OF HONOR

DEVELOPER: DREAMWORKS INTERACTIVE

The first *Medal Of Honor* game reads like a film, with Steven Spielberg on directorial duties and Michael Giacchino handling the orchestral score. It's a great shooter as well and has gone on to spawn more than ten sequels.

2000



THE SIMS

DEVELOPER: MAXIS

Will Wright's person simulator is one of EA's biggest successes, creating an utterly engaging game that has even managed to snare the fairer sex. It's since spawned numerous expansions and two full sequels.

2001

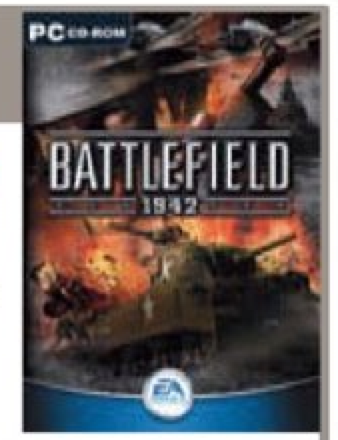


SSX TRICKY

DEVELOPER: EA CANADA

While the original earned fans due to being a decent enough game in an otherwise dull launch line-up, this sequel was far better thanks to the addition of enhanced controls, improved visuals, and over-the-top Uber moves.

2002



BATTLEFIELD 1942

DEVELOPER: DIGITAL ILLUSIONS

This is an excellent FPS from previous pinball king Digital Illusions that's set in World War II. It's since turned into one of EA's most important franchises, and was re-released in cut-down form on the new engine on Xbox Live and PSN.

2003

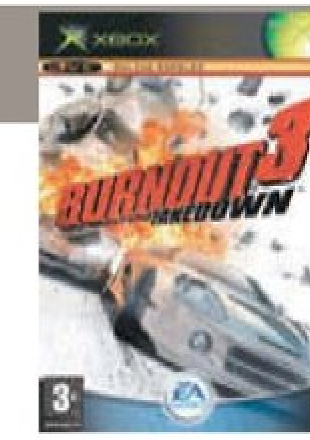


MEDAL OF HONOR: INFILTRATOR

DEVELOPER: NETHEROCK

This lovely little GBA release never seems to get the love it deserves, so here we are championing it again. It's an extremely fun old-school shooter that blends *Commando* and *Operation Wolf*. Fast paced and with plenty of variety, it's one of the GBA's better run-and-guns.

2004



BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

DEVELOPER: CRITERION

Yes, it lacks the freedom of the brilliant *Burnout Paradise* and the DJ continues to annoy, but Criterion's third *Burnout* game is the highlight of the series for many. It's breathtakingly fast and still insanely exciting to play.

2005

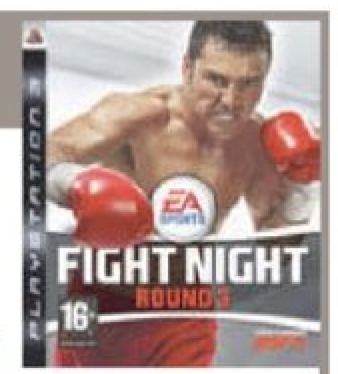


ODDWORLD: STRANGER'S WRATH

DEVELOPER: ODDWORLD INHABITANTS

An amazingly innovative first-person adventure that suffered a commercial death because EA didn't seem to know how to market it. It's recently received an HD makeover.

2006

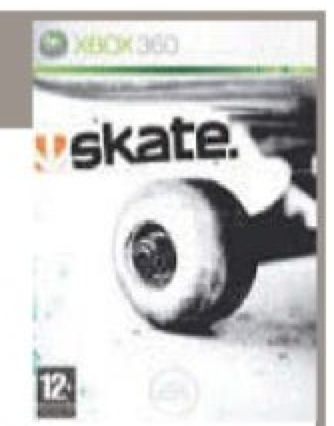


FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

DEVELOPER: EA CHICAGO

Widely remembered thanks to its stunning visuals, *Fight Night* remains highly playable for its innovative control system that gave you an insane amount of control over your chosen pugilist. You'll wince at some of the realistic facial damage.

2007

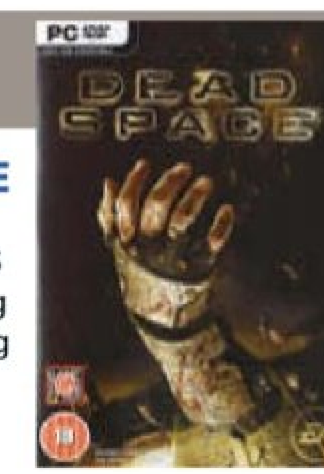


SKATE

DEVELOPER: EA BLACK BOX

Tony Hawk ruled the roost for eight long years until EA Black Box came along and crashed the party. *Skate* was sublime to play and praised for its innovative analogue stick control system, and the Hawkster has found himself floundering ever since.

2008



DEAD SPACE

DEVELOPER: VISCERAL GAMES

2008 saw EA taking risks by introducing a number of new IPs, including *Mirror's Edge*. It's *Dead Space* that stands tall, though. It may have borrowed heavily from *Resi 4*, but the end result was a stunning horror game.

2009



DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

DEVELOPER: BIOWARE

This gritty sandals-based RPG took the mechanics that had served so well in *Mass Effect* and gave them a fantasy spin. The end result was another epic, which was well supported thanks to additional DLC.

2010



NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT

DEVELOPER: CRITERION

This slick racer took elements from both the original *Hot Pursuit* and older arcade stalwarts like *Chase HQ* to create a thrilling arcade racer. It boasts fantastic online integration as well, constantly persuading you to best friends' scores.

2011

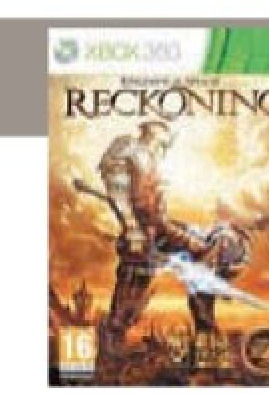


SHADOWS OF THE DAMNED

DEVELOPER: GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE

A quirky horror game from Grasshopper that focuses on third-person action, but also throws in some shoot-'em-up levels. It's a quirky, enjoyable game that didn't find the audience it deserved.

2012



KINGDOMS OF AMALUR: RECKONING

DEVELOPER: 38 STUDIOS/BIG HUGE GAMES

While *Mass Effect 3* received all the attention, we felt *Kingdoms Of Amalur* was a far worthier game. It's a fantastic new franchise but sadly couldn't stop its development team from recently closing.

ELECTRONIC ARTS™

INSTANT EXPERT

Your simple primer to the biggest games, developers and franchises

#2 ELECTRONIC ARTS

We chart a potted history of Electronic Arts. From MULEs and John Madden to 3DO and frustrated spouses, here's your instant two-page introduction to everything EA

THE BEGINNING

In 1972, Trip Hawkins had a Eureka moment. Trip was an avid sports fan who enjoyed designing and creating stat-filled board and card games, and realising the potential that televisions and computers could bring to his love, he knew straight away that he wanted to make computer games.

By 1975, around the time that the first microcomputers were appearing in shops, Trip foresaw a computer boom and decided he should set up his own computer software company. In the seven years that followed, he plotted his life in such a way as to ensure that his goal would be realised. He finished school, learnt to program, and graduated from Harvard with a degree that he had tailored towards videogames. After graduating, he joined Apple in 1978, and in the four years that followed helped to grow the size and profits of the company. However, seeing the success Atari was enjoying in the videogames industry, and growing increasingly concerned that he was leaving it too late to put his plan into action, Trip resigned from his post as director of product marketing and set up Amazin' Software – soon to be rechristened as Electronic Arts – on 28 May 1982.

The name change came about as many of EA's founding members disliked the original name. It was thus agreed that a new one be chosen by committee. Electronic Arts was settled on, based on the view that the business would view games as an art form and their makers as artists. This thinking would inform EA's early business model, which mimicked closely that of a record company. Dealing directly with retailers instead of distributors, Trip and his team combed America to find the best unsigned games and programming talent and offered them the best resources to help sharpen their games and get them reaching a wider market. EA had effectively hit upon the business model that has been used by game publishers ever since.

THE HISTORY

While EA's inception took many years to come, its growth was rapid. The first batch of EA titles emerged, and examples like *Hard Hat Mack*, *Archon* and the superb multiplayer game *MULE* didn't disappoint. The quality games kept coming with the likes of the *Bard's Tale* series, *Populous* and, of course, *John Madden Football*.

By the end of the Eighties, though, EA was staring at a crossroads, but Trip was clear on which direction to take. He knew that his company had to get an early start on the 16-bit market, and though EA released software for the NES, SNES, ST and Amiga, it aligned itself most closely with Sega and the Genesis. The first games to hit the 16-bit console were Will Harvey's *The Immortal, Budokan: The Martial Spirit* and, in one of those decisions that would come to define a generation, a rewrite of Trip's Apple II football sim, *John Madden Football*. EA grew as consoles assaulted the mass market. Trip had betted right, and as the industry grew and the number of people that were required to create games began expanding, so EA found itself signing teams and studios instead of solo programmers.

In many ways, the 3DO was Trip's ultimate defence against the all-powerful hardware manufacturers from Japan. With no region lockout and attractive licensing fees, it was a 32-bit console designed to offer a freer, state-of-the-art platform for games publishers. Determined to make the idea a success, Trip left EA in 1994 to focus his attentions on the 3DO, and Larry Probst took over as CEO. However, as the licence to manufacture the systems was offered to electronics companies, its price soared when they attempted to make a profit, unlike the subsidised hardware of traditional consoles. A high retail price, lack of third-party software support, and the arrival of rival 32-bit machines from Sony and Sega ultimately spelled disaster for the 3DO, and it was discontinued in 1996.

EA, meanwhile, continued with acquisitions, but the pressures of sustaining growth soon began to manifest. EA found itself being criticised for buying up studios and offering them little autonomy, and disbanding them if their games failed to perform. Its reputation was hurt further with the publication of the EA Spouse blog post in 2004, in which the frustrated wife of an EA employee publicly criticised the company's labour practices and the effects they were having on her family. Reaction to the post led to a change in working conditions across the whole of the games industry.

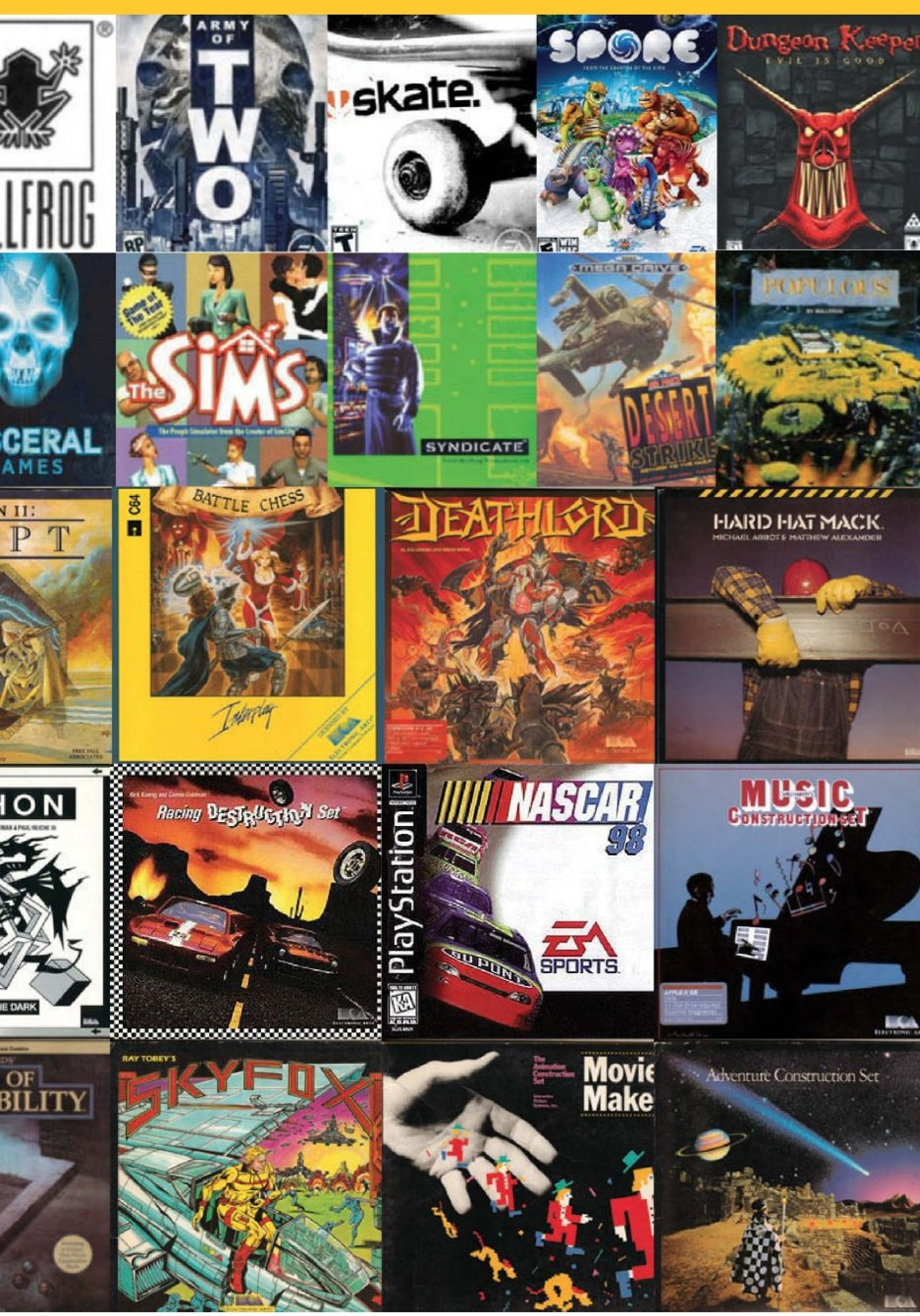
THE LEGACY

It's open to question that 3DO represented Trip's effort to offset the direction that the games industry was heading, by offering a cheaper, freer, more powerful platform for publishers to create games. But when the profit margins of hardware manufacturers put a big hole in the 3DO's hull and it eventually sank, EA's path of growing its business as a developer/publisher was ultimately decided. Under new leadership – CEO John Riccitiello replaced Larry Probst after he stepped down in 2007 – EA has said that it's learning from its mistakes. In 2008 Riccitiello acknowledged that the 'meddling' practices of old were wrong, and said that EA would look into giving more autonomy to the studios it acquires. Though many still look upon EA with some cynicism, its legacy is helping to cultivate the games industry and establish the publishing model that is still used today.



BITE-SIZED INSTANT EXPERT

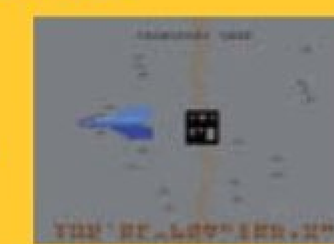
- **In 1975, a young Trip Hawkins decides to set up his own software company. Seven years later he achieves his goal and Electronic Arts is formed.**
- **In 1984, the first Electronic Arts game to hit a million sales arrives. The game to reach this milestone was Will Harvey's *Music Construction Set*. The following year, EA became the number one software supplier in the US.**
- **In 1987, EA opened a UK base of operations and ended its relationship with Ariolasoft, the German company that previously handled all of its distribution in Europe.**
- **EA forms the EA Sports label in 1991. It was originally dubbed EASN (Electronic Arts Sports Network), an unsubtle play on ESPN, the famous television sports network.**



#2 : ELECTRONIC ARTS

FIVE TO TRY

MULE



One of the classic multiplayer turn-based strategy titles, *MULE* sees four different species of alien competing for economic primacy on a far-off planet. Trading in energy, food and minerals, harvesting them with the aid of MULEs to do the heavy lifting, *MULE* is a splendid game of supply and demand, not to mention an entertaining four-player game to boot.

The Bard's Tale



A groundbreaking dungeon-crawler notable for its colourful animated graphics. With a wide variety of areas to explore and a great levelling system, players could create a guild of adventurers comprising different character classes, including a cool spell-casting bard who could level up your entire party, and embark on a quest to thwart an evil wizard. It spawned a successful RPG series for EA.

Twisted: The Game Show



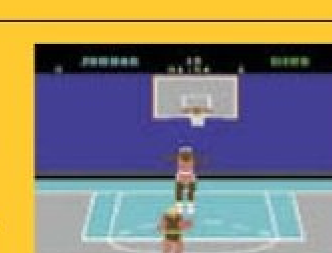
Predating *Buzz*, *Mario Party* and *Scene It?*, *Twisted* is a party game granddaddy. It saw you compete in a demented quiz show, complete with canned laughter, a cheesy host, offbeat contestants, weird mini-games and amusing commercials. It's an underappreciated 3DO gem.

The Immortal



Predating *Diablo* by almost a decade, Will Harvey's isometric combat RPG, *The Immortal*, certainly deserves highlighting. Playing as a wizard who is looking to rescue his mentor from a goblin-filled and booby-trapped dungeon, it was notable for its gory animations and combat system, which saw the action switch to a one-on-one fighter. Originally written for the Apple II, the game later graced the Amiga, ST, NES and Mega Drive.

One On One



Or, to give it its full title, *One On One: Dr J vs Larry Bird*. It's notable because it marks EA's first ever sports title. Moreover, it was one of the first games to feature a real-life sports personality. You got two, in fact: Larry Bird and Julius Erving. With detailed player animation and graphics, a dynamic referee and a selection of different play modes, as well as player endorsements, it can be seen as the archetype of the EA sports game model.

NOTABLE EACQUISITIONS

Electronic Arts has secured a number of studios over the years. Here are some of the most notable…

Origin Systems

The Texas-based developer famous for bringing *Ultima* to the world counts such names as Warren Spector, Richard Garriott and John Romero among its alumni. Under the ownership of EA from 1992, it created *Wing Commander*, *System Shock* and early MMORPG *Ultima Online*, before being disbanded in 2004.

Distinctive Software

Purchased by EA in 1991 for a cool $11 million based on a proven track record in porting to various platforms, Distinctive is one of its success stories. Known today as EA Canada, the studio has worked on some of EA's most lucrative franchises, from sports in *FIFA* and *NHL* to racing in the *Need For Speed* series and *SSX*.

Bullfrog

In a relationship dating back to the early Eighties, EA published many of Bullfrog's games before buying the company outright in 1995. Bullfrog released a slew of popular games under EA, including *Magic Carpet* and *Syndicate*. The Bullfrog name was retired when the studio was folded into EA UK in 2004.

Maxis

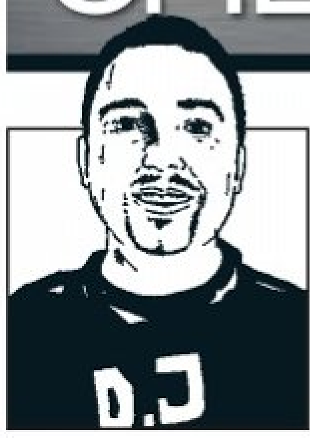
EA purchased Maxis in 1997, and after releasing *SimCity 3000*, struck gold when *The Sims* became the bestselling PC game in history. As demand for sequels and spin-offs grew, EA set up a separate studio to oversee the franchise. Maxis's last big release was the long-awaited evolution sim, *Spore*.

Criterion

Famous for the *Burnout* series and creating the RenderWare engine, Criterion is another studio that EA has done very well out of. Kicking off with the 2006 FPS *Black*, the studio has continued releasing popular *Burnout* sequels and more recently applied its talent to the superb *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit*.

CLASSIC GAMING FOR UNDER A FIVER

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learnt about retro gaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you really want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, to procure but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can be picked up for less than five English pounds…

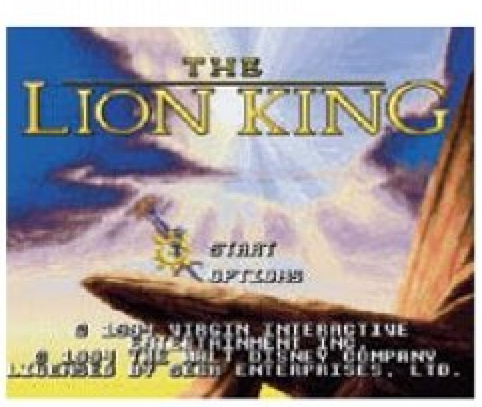


» [Mega Drive] The animation in *The Lion King* is wonderful. It's hardly surprising, though, as it's done by Disney animators.



» [Mega Drive] You can't hear it here, but the music playing is a great representation of the film's tunes.

THE LION KING



INFO

- **SYSTEM:** MEGA DRIVE
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** SNES, PC, AMIGA, NES, GAME BOY, MASTER SYSTEM, GAME GEAR
- **RELEASED:** 1994
- **PUBLISHER:** VIRGIN INTERACTIVE
- **DEVELOPER:** WESTWOOD STUDIOS

A cute platformer starring a baby lion is the last game you'd expect to see from the creators of the hardened RTS series, *Command & Conquer*. Nevertheless, that is exactly what happened when Westwood Studios unleashed *The Lion King*, its slick adaptation of the hit Disney film, which was a collaboration between the developer and actual Disney artists.

Nowadays Disney games are often ignored by the gaming masses, but they were big business for publishers in the 8- and 16-bit years, with a number of genuine classics such as DuckTales and Castle Of Illusion still being held in high regard today. While The Lion King isn't quite in the same league, it's still a highly enjoyable platformer that perfectly captures the spirit of the original 1994 film and is well worth seeking out if you're a fan of the movie and the genre.

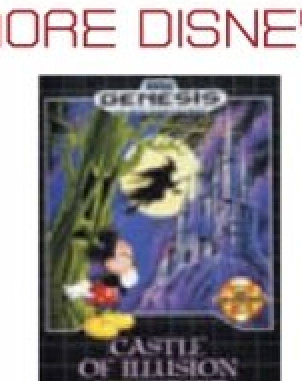
Closely following the plot of the movie, and interspaced by simple cut-scenes with digitised voiceovers, The Lion King starts off with you controlling a young Simba as he makes his way through some gorgeous but rather empty levels. Being a young lion, he only has access to simple pounce and roll attacks, which are usually enough to allow him to get past enemies. Armoured foes can be temporarily flipped with a roar, which grants Simba access to their less-protected bellies. Adult Simba loses his roll attack but does gain a far stronger paw swipe, the ability to leap on and viciously maul wayward leopards and other critters, and a more powerful roar.

Split into two distinct parts – young Simba and adult Simba – The Lion King's piece de resistance is its truly epic stampede level, which sees a frantic baby Simba trying to escape a stampeding herd of wildebeest by running towards the player. It's a heart-stopping sequence in the movie and is perfectly replicated in digital form, with Simba dodging any wildebeest that get too near him and leaping over the rocky landscape. The effect is stunning, among the earliest examples of its type that we've uncovered – Traveller's Tales' Mickey Mania was released a month or two earlier – and it still looks ace today.

The Lion King's bonus modes also hold up extremely well, having been centred on the madcap antics of stooges Timon and Pumbaa. Bug Toss has the hyperactive meerkat Timon randomly throwing bugs down to his warthog companion, while Bug Hunt sees Timon chasing after as many bugs as he can within a strict time limit. Both games finish early if a spider is accidentally eaten.

Gorgeous to look at and with instantly accessible gameplay, The Lion King is an incredibly fun little platformer, regardless of what format you end up choosing.

MORE DISNEY MAGIC



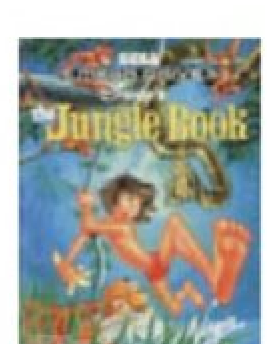
1. Castle Of Illusion
The platformer that all other Disney games are judged by. Even today it's an endlessly enjoyable adventure.



2. QuackShot
Another classic from Sega. This time the focus is on the House of Mouse's hyperactive mallard.



3. Aladdin
Many swear by Capcom's SNES game, but we feel that Shiny's Mega Drive offering is far better.



4. The Jungle Book
Another slick platformer. Eurocom handled most ports, while Virgin took care of the PC and NES.



5. World Of Illusion
Sega's follow-up to *Castle Of Illusion* introduced Donald Duck, along with clever co-op mechanics.



6. DuckTales
This saw Scrooge McDuck taking time out from counting his wealth to rescue his kidnapped nephews.


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MODERN WARFARE 4 SIGHTED
NEXT-GEN ASSASSIN'S CREED
'SONY REPEATING MISTAKES'
ISSUE NO 220
EXPLOSIVE EXCLUSIVE
BEYOND
THE NEW HEAVY RAIN
David Cage: "You'll forget it's a game"
THE SHOCKING DEMANDS FOR
PlayStation 4
RIP UNCHARTED
THE LAST OF US
Inside PS3's most violent game
DVD
E3 BLOWOUT
VIDEO GUIDES
THE BEST OF 2012
OVER 30
CALL OF DUTY
BLACK OPS II
THE EXPLOSIVE TRAILER SECRETS YOU MISSED
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On the trail of Mire Mare

MIRE MARE – the mythical Sabreman game that never saw the light of day. Some believe it exists; others claim to have actually played it. Martyn Carroll dons his pith helmet and boldly goes in search of the truth behind the most intriguing of retro tales



» According to Rare's Leigh Loveday, Tim Stamper was bemused that anyone would want to see this cover art.

I picked up the trail to *Mire Mare* later than most. I played, and adored, nearly every Ultimate game on my old Spectrum, but I never managed to complete a single Sabreman adventure. I therefore didn't see the finish screens to *Underwurlde*, *Knight Lore* or *Pentagram*, all of which mentioned the mysterious *Mire Mare*, so the promise of this new Sabreman game completely escaped me.

That changed when I first visited the official Rare website in the late Nineties. The site, put together by former *Your Sinclair* contributor Leigh Loveday, featured a lovely retro section that looked back to the firm's ACG/Ultimate days. And it included a 'Limbo' page where a few of the games that never made it were mentioned. Headlining this page was the fascinating story of *Mire Mare*. Leigh revealed that some work had been done on the game and that it was to have more in common with *Sabre Wulf*, Sabreman's debut, than the later isometric adventures: "The basic game design and cover art were both completed, but when the actual coding aspect became entangled in the chaos of the company's hectic career-peak schedule, it became inevitable that *Mire Mare* would never see the light of day."

So that was that. There was no *Mire Mare*. All that remained was the A2-sized cover painting, which Leigh grabbed from Tim Stamper's personal artwork folder and scanned for inclusion on the website.

The revelation

The investigation would end right here were it not for an interview that appeared on the Ultimate Wurlde fan site in 2002. Site owner Rob Uttley was contacted by someone who claimed to have worked for Ultimate in a marketing role and was willing to share some inside secrets. This was big news, as former Ultimate staff rarely went on record. Even bigger news was this anonymous person's revelations about *Mire Mare*.

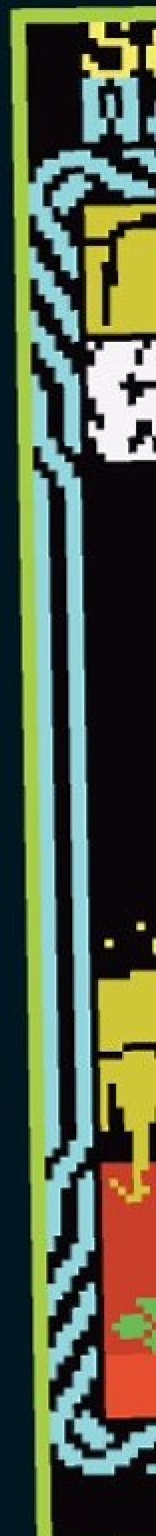
"It does exist," he told Rob. "I have seen it, I have played it, and it was a corker!"

At this point, anyone with any interest in Ultimate would have surely jumped for joy and kissed the dog-eared *Sabre Wulf* poster on their wall. The rumours were true – *Mire Mare* did exist. And, incredibly, it was playable! But why wouldn't Ultimate release such an impressive game if it was complete? It was because of US Gold, apparently.

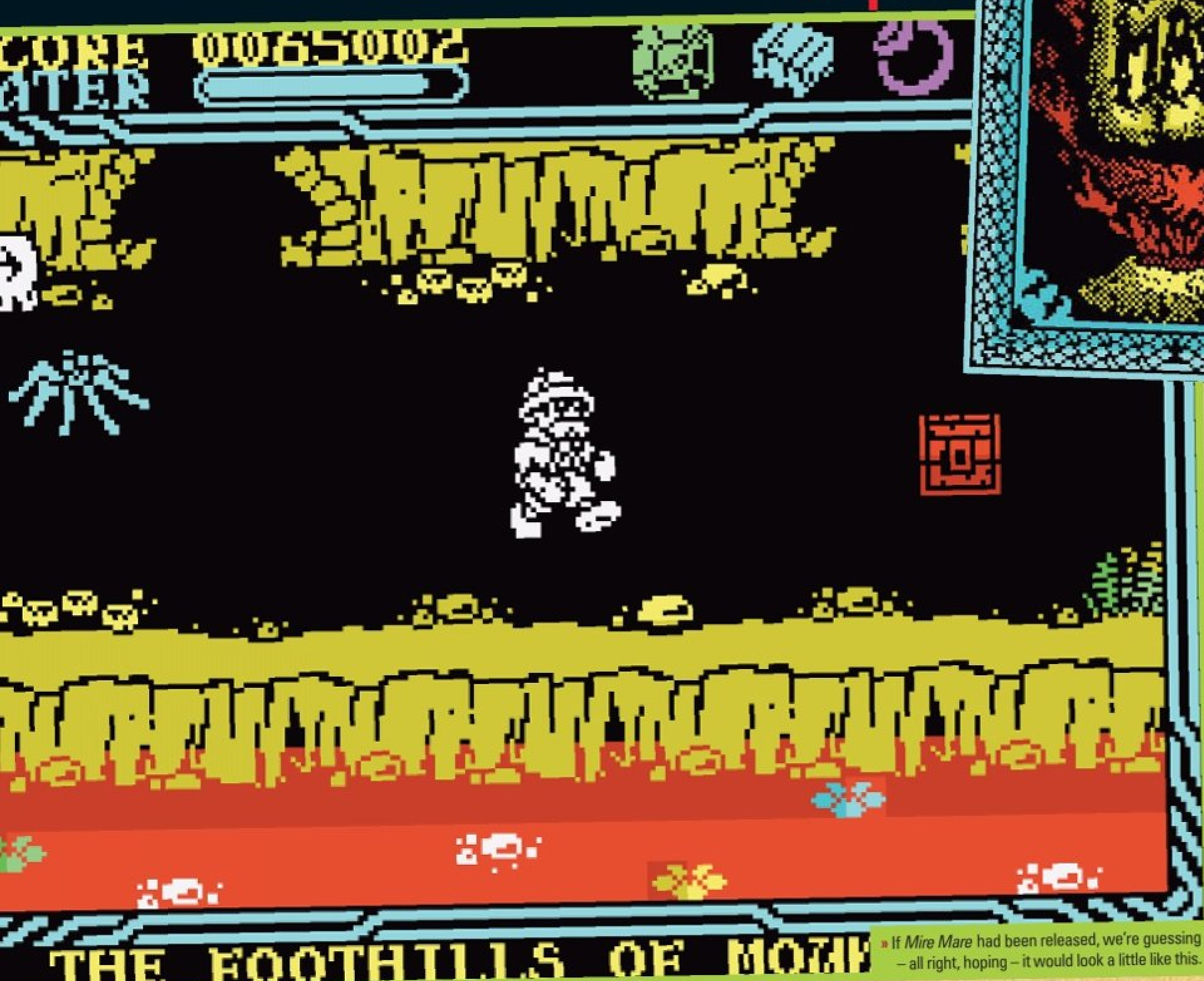
It's well known that at the beginning of 1986, the Ultimate name and back catalogue were sold off to US Gold. According to this insider, *Mire Mare* was actually completed before *Gunfright* – the last Ultimate game the Stampers worked on – but the pair wanted to hold it back as a "grand finale" before they left the Spectrum behind and moved over to the NES. However, the Stampers learnt that US Gold was more interested in whacking out the old Ultimate hits on the Kixx budget label than marketing new, full-price games. "This really upset the team," he revealed, "so when US Gold approached Chris and Tim asking where this planned *Mire Mare* title was, as they would like to put it out on the Kixx label, they were told that it was not finished – although it basically was."

This was riveting stuff. We now had a semi-plausible reason for why it was never released, and another reason to moan about US Gold. Surely it was just a matter of time before a copy of the game surfaced.

> "Why wouldn't Ultimate release such an impressive game if it was complete?"







» If *Mire Mare* had been released, we're guessing – all right, hoping – it would look a little like this.

Mire Mare: an artist's impression

If *Mire Mare* had been released, what would it have looked like? Speculation is tricky as the only known fact is that it was to hark back to the top-down style of *Sabre Wulf*. Hopefully it would have retained the vibrant colours of Sabreman's debut rather than a drab monochrome display, and would have featured scrolling, instead of a flick screen approach. It's conceivable too that the gameplay would evolve from a simple collect-'em-up, into a more structured adventure with specific, usable objects and NPCs that may help or hinder Sabreman.

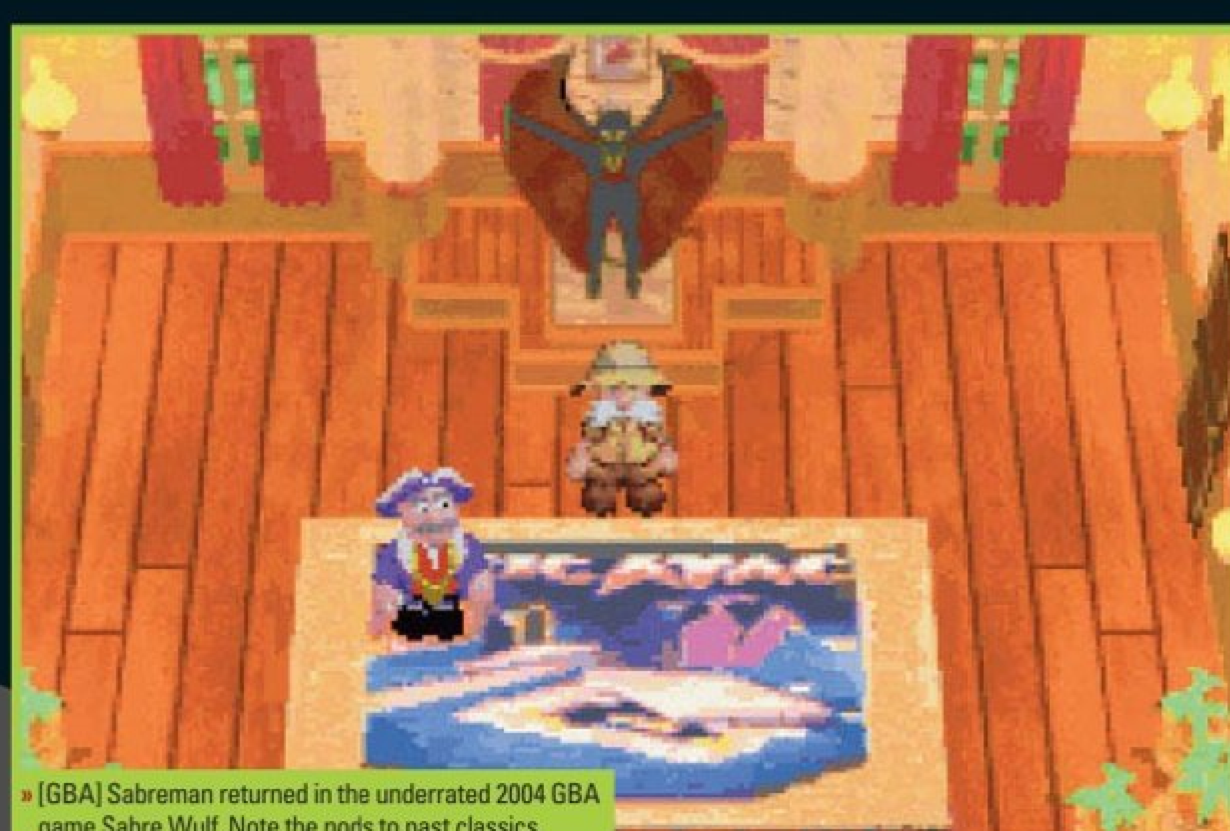
The title alludes to a swamp setting, and the cover art shows a fiery pit with what appears to be a phoenix in the flames, suggesting an environment that features both humid, tropical jungle and arid, volcanic scenery. Additional clues may possibly be found in Tim Stamper's 'Land of Ultimatum' map, which came with the *Collected Works* release. The first four Sabreman games are all referenced, and there's also a series of volcanoes, which must surely relate to *Mire Mare*. Surrounding these volcanoes are several named locations – Stone Hills, Dark Mountains and Mount Sol. Maybe these were to feature in *Mire Mare*?

Based on this guesswork and speculation, graphics artist Jarrod Bentley (*Crystal Kingdom Dizzy, Turbo The Tortoise, Ghost Castle* games) has mocked up a screen showing how *Mire Mare* might have looked on the Spectrum…

In 2005, the same ex-employee spoke to Spectrum fanzine *ZX Shed*. Still under the guise of anonymity, he repeated most of the same claims, although this time he did say that the game looked like *Sabre Wulf*, tallying with what Leigh Loveday revealed years earlier. He also claimed something that simply didn't add up. Talking about *Solar Jetman*, he said that the game was being worked on when he left the company. And when did he leave Ultimate? Before the US Gold takeover, apparently, which meant that Ultimate would have been working on *Solar Jetman* prior to 1986. Yet *Solar Jetman* was actually developed for the NES by Zippo Games, and according to the Pickford brothers, work on the game didn't commence until mid-1989.

I decided to go back and re-read the Ultimate Wurlde interview to see if I could spot any other oddities. The first thing that stuck out was his assertion that "*Knight Lore* was completed and ready to ship out ten months before *Sabre Wulf*". It's a well-worn tale that *Knight Lore* was completed before *Sabre Wulf*, and *Knight Lore* was held back because Ultimate felt that it was so ahead of everything else out there that it would hamper sales of *Sabre Wulf*. Tim Stamper himself claimed this in an interview in the March 1988 issue of *The Games Machine* magazine, yet evidence suggests that he may have been exaggerating to some extent. A few years back, former **RG** contributor Chris Wild poked around in the code of both games and discovered that *Sabre Wulf* uses more primitive coding routines in line with Ultimate's earlier releases, whereas *Knight Lore* employed more optimised techniques. In short, the code evolved. It doesn't make sense that Chris would revert back to develop the supposedly subsequent *Sabre Wulf*. What's more likely is that *Knight Lore* was in production and put on hold at some point to develop *Sabre Wulf*. The interviewee's claim that it was "ready to ship" ten months before *Sabre Wulf* is implausible. *Sabre Wulf* was released in June 1984 – ten months before then would be roughly the time when Ultimate was busy working on *Lunar Jetman* and *Atic Atac*.

The other questionable answer came when Rob asked him about the memorable team photograph that appeared in the *Games Machine* article. The photo shows staff outside Rare's Twycross HQ, but the caption only gives full names for Chris, Tim and Carole Stamper – the rest are just listed by their first names. When naming the people featured, the insider quotes the magazine caption almost verbatim – and fails to fill in any of the missing surnames. You'd think that if he'd previously worked with some of these people he'd reveal their full names! That got me thinking – I wonder if any of the Ultimate staff remember him?



» [GBA] Sabreman returned in the underrated 2004 GBA game Sabre Wulf. Note the nods to past classics.

I needed his name, and this was given to me by the guys at *ZX Shed*.

> "Getting in touch with ex-Ultimate staff isn't easy. Getting them to speak is even harder"



» [Spectrum] Sabreman in Gandalf guise gets to grips with mystic runes in *Pentagram*.



» [Spectrum] Mark Betteridge was responsible for the technically impressive but tough-as-nails *Cyberun*.

I also got hold of his email address and, in May 2008, sent him a quick message saying that I was looking for additional information about *Mire Mare*. At first he seemed slightly annoyed that I'd tracked him down, but then agreed to answer my questions. Unfortunately, he added nothing new and simply referred me back to the Ultimate Wurlde interview. But at least I now had his name.

Getting in touch with ex-Ultimate staff isn't easy. Getting them to speak is even harder. However, I managed to make contact with Huw Ward via the Friends Reunited website. At the time, Huw was Rare's head of testing, and he's been involved in QA roles since the early days when he was Ultimate's original game tester. He's one of the company's longest-serving employees, and he also happens to be Carole Stamper's brother. He's a very credible source.

Huw wasn't prepared to grant us a full interview, no doubt due to his links to the Stampers and his continued employment with Rare, but I was able to put this questionable marketing guy's name to him. His reply wasn't entirely surprising. He'd never heard of him, and revealed that Ultimate never employed anyone in what could be classed as a marketing role. And as for *Mire Mare*, Huw doesn't remember seeing a single graphic or line of code.

I later contacted Leigh Loveday, who still works at Rare, and mentioned the guy's name and his claims. The Stampers had left Rare by this point so he wasn't able to ask them directly, but he quizzed some of the old boys at the company and they were all in agreement with Huw – no one remembered this guy or saw anything to support his claims regarding *Mire Mare*. The whole thing was clearly a hoax.

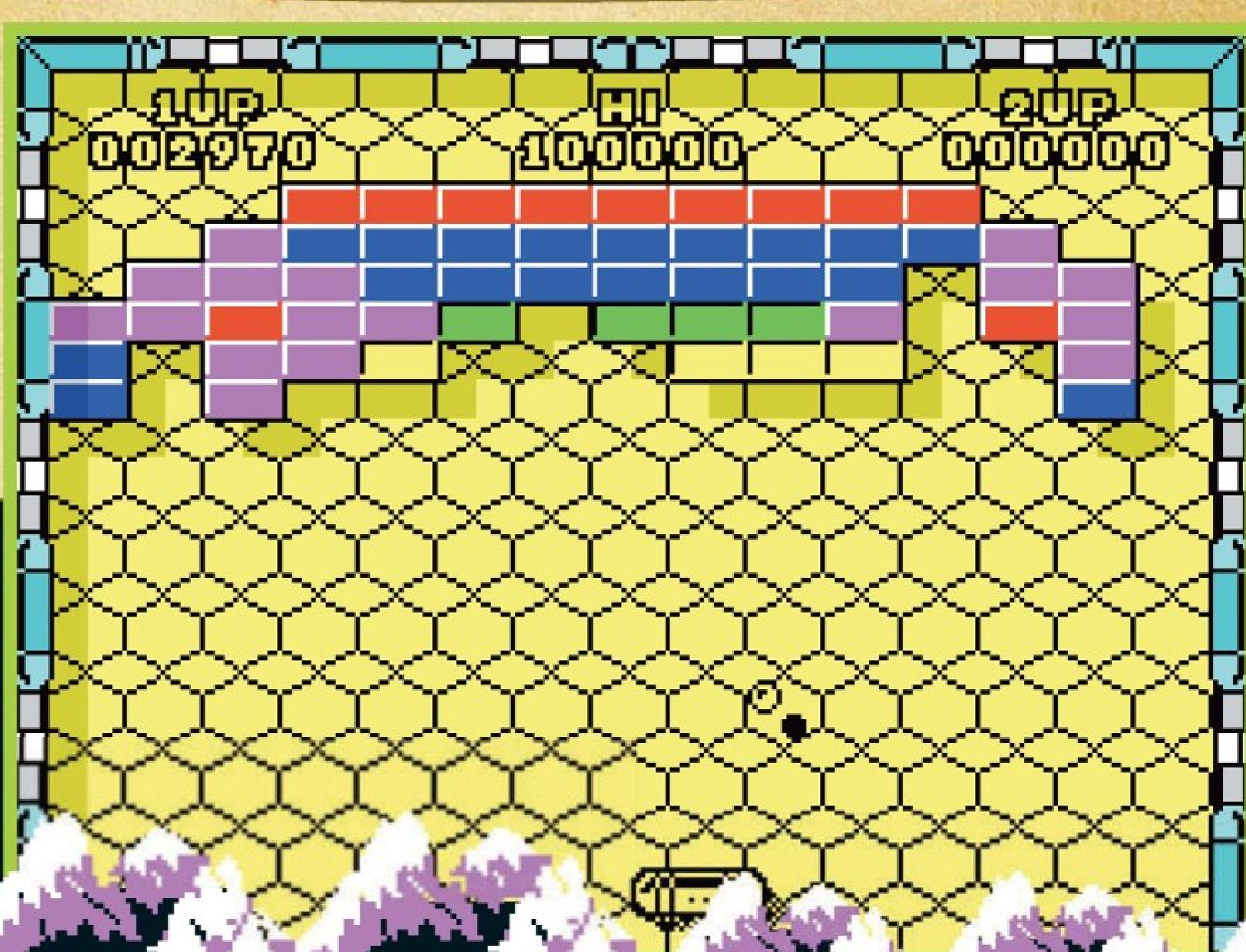
the resumption

Fast-forward to 2012 and unsurprisingly no new *Mire Mare* details have come to light. I'm positive that the claims of a playable game are untrue, but I'm still keen to discover specific details about the game's design – plot, location, objectives and so on – and determine whether any actual coding was done. The next step was to find out who might have worked on *Mire Mare*.

To focus my search, I needed to try to determine when the game would have been in development. The *Mire Mare* name was first revealed in 1984, yet Ultimate continued to release Spectrum games until 1987, *Bubbler* being the last. Thankfully, a brief news item in the June 1987 issue of *Sinclair User* dates it. "Ultimate still exists," went the text. "What with *Bubbler* being moderately OK, we now have top secret news of upcoming games. First up will be *Mire Mare*. Nobody at US Gold knows anything about it and Ultimate is, as usual, locked away in a bunker and

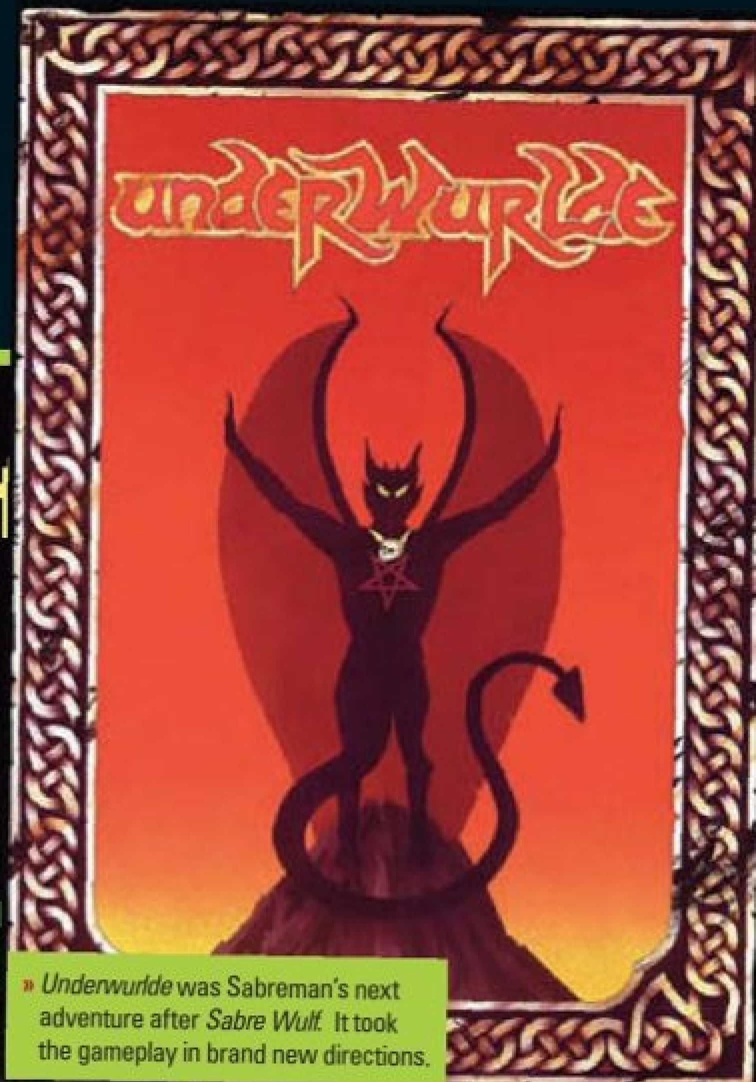
Mire Mare secrets

While researching *Mire Mare*, a couple of interesting facts came to light about Mark Betteridge, the programmer who started at Ultimate as a teenager and eventually became Rare's studio director when the Stampers left the business in 2007. The first is that it was Mark, not Chris Stamper, who wrote the scrolling Filmation II engine that was used in *Nightshade* and *Gunfright*. The second, more surprising fact is that Mark briefly went freelance during 1987 and wrote the brilliant Spectrum version of *Batty* for Elite under the pseudonym Mark Crane. His original version of the game, entitled *Wipe Out*, carries the credit **KB.RAM – an anagram of MARK.B.**





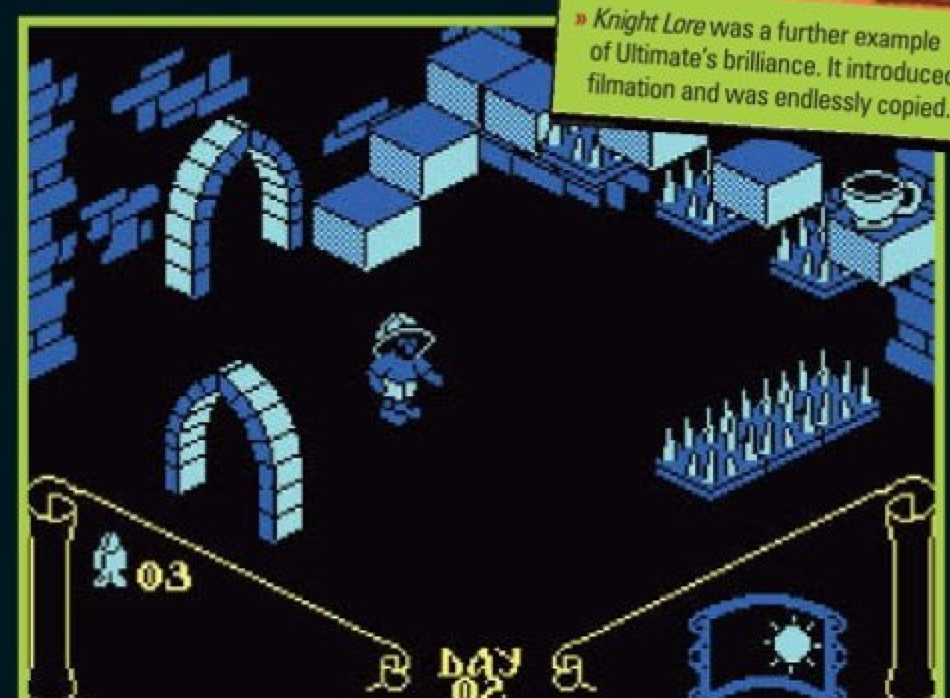
» [Spectrum] In *Underwurlde*, Sabreman had to deal with grumpy guardians blocking his path.

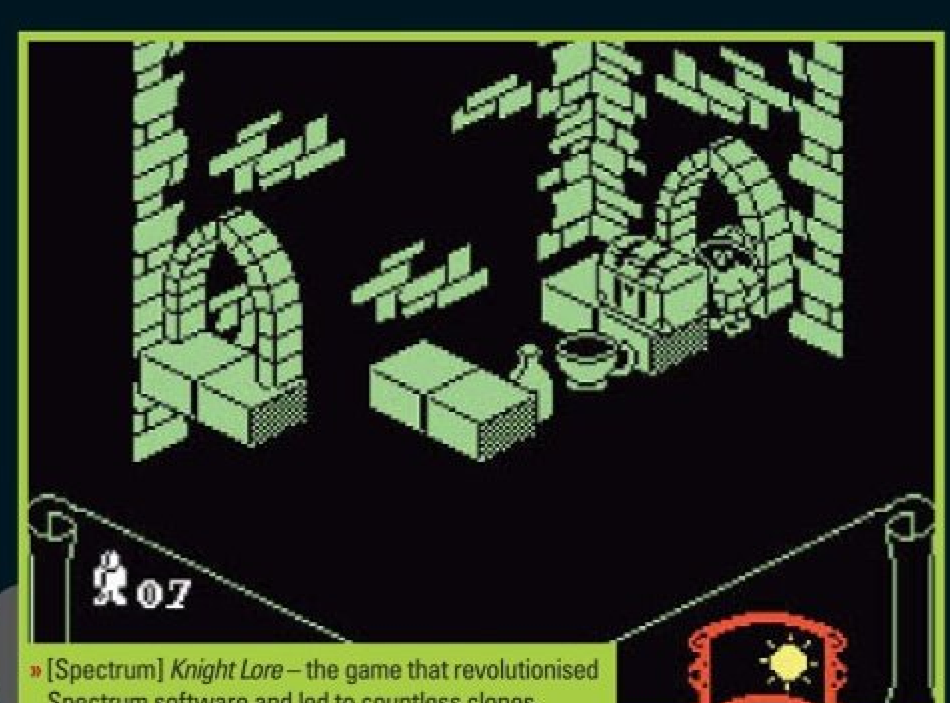


» *Underwurlde* was Sabreman's next adventure after *Sabre Wulf*. It took the gameplay in brand new directions.

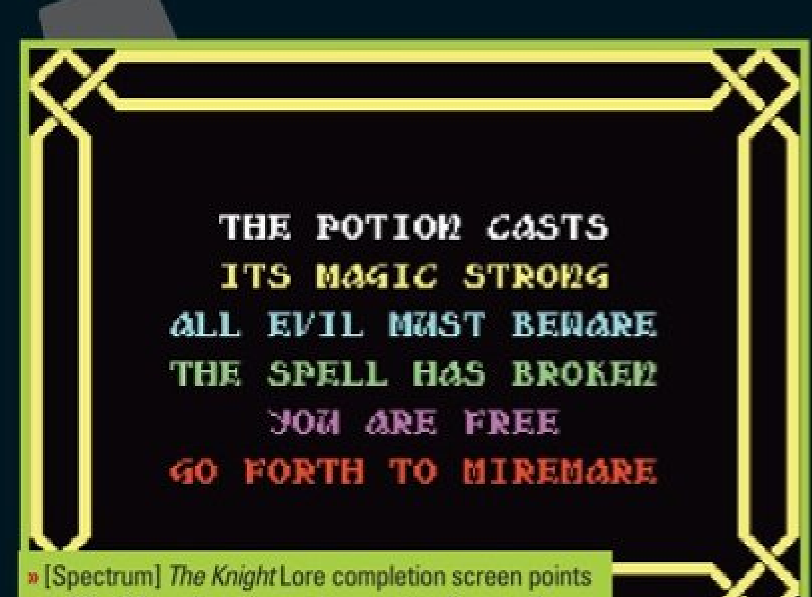


» *Knight Lore* was a further example of Ultimate's brilliance. It introduced filmation and was endlessly copied.





» [Spectrum] *Knight Lore* – the game that revolutionised Spectrum software and led to countless clones.



» [Spectrum] *The Knight* Lore completion screen points to Mire Mare. In retrospect – worst ending ever!

not talking to anybody. Right after *Mire Mare* there is the prospect of '*Jetpac* brought up to date'."

So *Mire Mare* would have followed *Bubbler*. This seems feasible, as the finish screen to *Bubbler* promises a sequel, suggesting that the game wasn't intended to be Ultimate's Spectrum swansong. It would seem that whoever was responsible for *Bubbler* and the other post-Stamper Ultimate games – *Cyberun*, *Pentagram* and *Martianoids* – was probably involved with *Mire Mare*.

I emailed Leigh about the authorship of these games and he confirmed that in-house programmer Mark Betteridge definitely wrote *Cyberun*. The others were more uncertain, with the general consensus being that Mark and John Lathbury, one of the company's directors, were responsible. I was then reminded of an old email I'd received from former Rare community manager George Kelion, which listed Mark's selected softography. Among the NES and SNES titles was *Bubbler*. If Mark did *Cyberun* and *Bubbler*, maybe it was John behind *Pentagram* and *Martianoids*? One of them might know something.

Well, we can cross Mark off the list straight away, as he's already revealed in **RG** everything he knows about *Mire Mare*. "I don't think the game itself ever got very far," he said in issue 73. "It certainly wasn't **completed. There was every intention of finishing and releasing it, but Ultimate's time on the 8-bit home** computers turned out to be limited before it morphed into Rare and changed direction."

That left John. Unfortunately he appeared to have left the company following the transition to Rare and then seemingly vanished. An online search revealed his likely home address, so I posted him a letter but received no reply.

I began to wonder if any other Ultimate/Rare employees had additional information. This brought me back to the *Games Machine* article and the people in that team photo. Our friend Mr Anonymous wasn't able to provide full names for all of the staff, but by checking their first names against the credits for Rare's early NES games I was able to quickly identify them. I then managed to speak with three of them: Dave Wise, Kevin Bayliss and Paul Byford.

Musician Dave had very little involvement with the home computer side of the business, saying: "I only worked on one Ultimate game, but I have no idea which one it was." Graphic artist Kevin was similarly assigned to Rare projects: "I wasn't really involved in Spectrum game development. I joined Rare in late 1987 and we were working on new NES projects. The name *Mire Mare* is definitely familiar, but I'm not sure what happened with that game."

Programmer Paul drew a blank too, although he did offer **some fascinating information: "I can't help you with *Mire Mare*. I only ever worked for Rare.** The

mysterious figures of gaming

Over the years, Retro Gamer has spoken to dozens of UK gaming people, but a few have remained defiantly distant. Here are just some of our most wanted interviewees…





Chris and Tim Stamper >

Wanted to discuss: Everything Ultimate

Ah, the supremely secretive and talented Stamper brothers. The pair have been interviewed at length before – memorably in *The Games Machine* in 1988, and in *Edge* ten years later – but most of these concentrated on Rare rather than the early Ultimate days. When they were both still at Rare, **RG** editor Darran bugged them so much that Chris eventually agreed to answer a few questions for the Spectrum Legends feature in issue 29. It was hoped that once they'd dispensed with the day-to-day running of Rare they'd be more open to interviews, but the exact opposite is true. Please, Messrs Stamper, kindly gift us an afternoon of your time!



< Greg Follis and Roy Carter

Wanted to discuss: Gargoyle Games, Cuchulainn

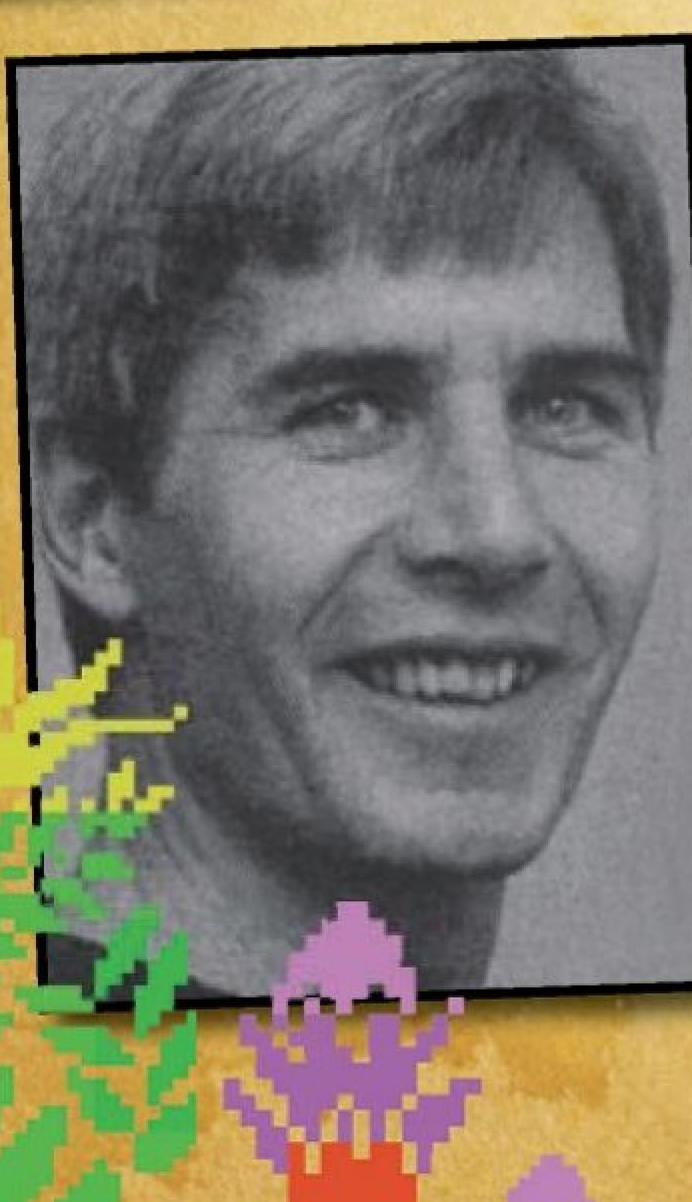
The talented twosome behind such hits as *Tir Na Nog*, *Light Force* and *Hydrofool* could often be found talking about their games in the Spectrum magazines. They seemed quite a pair, cracking jokes and ribbing each other. It's surprising, then, that neither seems at all interested in discussing Gargoyle these days. Emails have been sent, letters have been posted, calls have been made – and all have gone unanswered. What's particularly galling is that only Greg and Roy can reveal what really happened to the unreleased *Marsport* sequels and *Heavy On The Magick* expansions.



Paul Woakes >

Wanted to discuss: Novagen, *Mercenary*

As far as we're aware, the genius behind the *Mercenary* series has never been interviewed about his games – but he very nearly was. In the early days of **RG**, freelancer Andy Krouwel was in the process of writing an article about Novagen and was in contact with Paul. Andy even managed to secure permission to cover-mount the unreleased PC version of *Damocles*. However, the article was continually delayed and then Live Publishing went under. Shortly after, Andy wrote a *Mercenary* feature for *Edge* magazine, but it only featured input from Novagen co-founder Bruce Jordan, suggesting that Paul bailed out at some point.



< Mervyn Estcourt

Wanted to discuss: *Deathchase, Deathchase, Deathchase*

In the Micromega feature in **RG**81 we revealed that we'd tried to track down the *Deathchase* author for many years but got absolutely nowhere. We thought that he might have emigrated or maybe even shuffled off this mortal coil. That all changed earlier this year when freelancer Graeme Mason managed to get in touch with Mervyn's cousin, Tim Estcourt. Tim reported that Mervyn was alive and well, but sadly he wasn't interested in talking about his programming days, preferring to leave them in the past. Still, it's the 30th anniversary of *Deathchase* next year, so fingers crossed he'll change his mind for this special occasion.



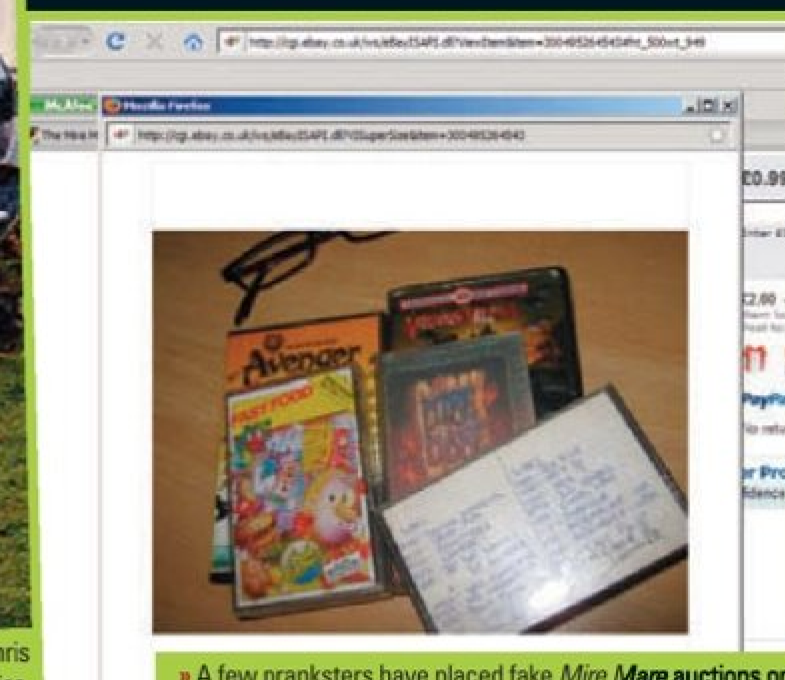
Chris Butler >

Wanted to discuss: Classy coin-op conversions

Chris was the C64's conversion king, producing brilliantly faithful versions of arcade hits like *Thunder Blade*, *Power Drift* and *Ninja Spirit*. He also wrote some very good original titles: *Z*, *Turbo Charge* and budget title *Arnie*. Chris appears to be lying low these days and we've been unable to arrange an interview. A few years back he appeared online via a mobile development company, but emails to him went unanswered. On a positive note, the website outlined his C64 work, so he's obviously proud of his old games. The next time he pops up online we'll try to snare him for sure.



» The photo from *The Games Machine's* article. From left to right: Tim Stamper, Carole Stamper, Chris Stamper, Rachel Edwards, David Wise, Mark Betteridge, Paul Byford, Stephen Stamper and Kevin Bayliss.



» A few pranksters have placed fake *Mire Mare* auctions on eBay over the years. Here's one of the more recent ones.



» This is the very first, little-seen Rare company logo, kindly provided by Paul Byford.

Stampers made a complete break from Ultimate at the end of 1986 when they moved to Twycross and set up Rare. Ultimate was never talked about at Rare. Occasionally I would come across something from Ultimate; I recall finding a code printout titled 'Adventure Game', which turned out to be the source for *Sabre Wulf*. I also recall an occasion when someone commented that US Gold was bringing out a collection of the old Ultimate games. Tim looked at Chris and said: 'That's the end of that, then.'"

The Realisation

That would seem to be the end of this investigation too. It would be great to hear what the Stampers had to say about *Mire Mare*, but that's unlikely given their apparent reticence to talk about the Ultimate days. I was about to give up when I read a post on the World of Spectrum forum where a member mentioned that one of his friends worked at Rare and had personally asked Tim Stamper about *Mire Mare*. I asked if the poster would put me in touch with his friend, and a few hours later I was exchanging emails with Trevor Attwood, a programmer who worked at Rare between 1995 and 2009 and was involved with the *Donkey Kong Country* series and many handheld titles.

I naturally began by asking him about his chat with Tim. "Shortly after joining Rare in 1995," he told me, "I thought it would be the perfect opportunity to ask Tim about *Mire Mare*. Asking Tim about *Mire Mare* and Chris about the *Lunar Jetman* 'trailer' was one of those things many new Rare employees did at that time, because we all grew up playing Ultimate's games. Anyway, Tim's answer was that some of the design had been completed on paper and the cover artwork had been done, but nothing else. Basically, no software existed. Over the years I worked there, I saw a few other employees asking Tim the same question, and his answer was always the same."

> "Whoever was responsible for the post-Stamper games was probably involved with Mire Mare"

That seems pretty conclusive. If the Stampers did indeed hide the existence of *Mire Mare* from US Gold, it's improbable that they'd continue the pretence after so many years, particularly in conversation with their own employees. Trevor went on to tell me that he was lead programmer on the 2004 Game Boy Advance title *Sabre Wulf*, and revealed that at one stage the game was going to be called… *Mire Mare*! "The development team was asked to think of a name for the game. I remembered *Mire Mare* and thought it would be a good opportunity to finally get it released to the public. So, this and other names were forwarded to the management team. Initially, Tim and Chris thought it was a good idea, but it was later rejected because the game was going to have a worldwide release and the name wouldn't have any weight outside of Britain. Also, *Mire Mare* didn't represent the new GBA game, which was intended to be a reboot of the franchise and hence contain elements from the original *Sabre Wulf* game."

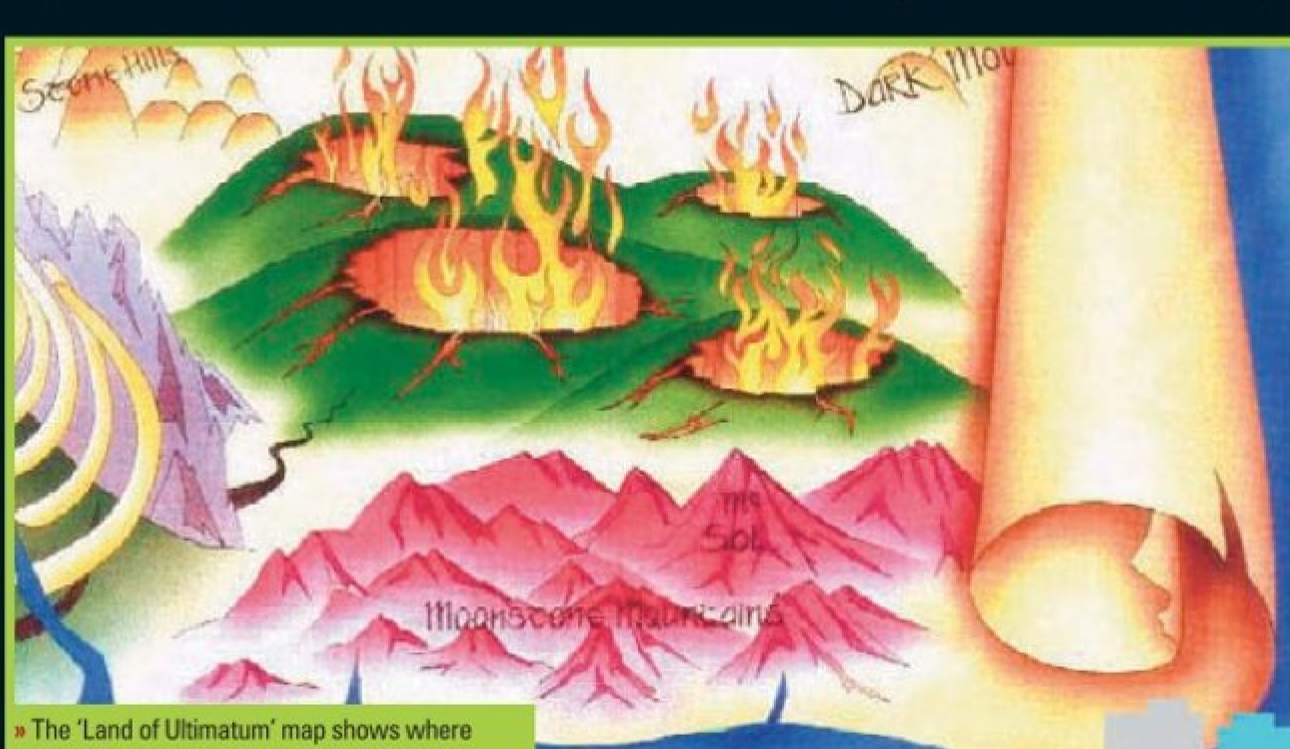
According to Trevor, Rare was hoping that the rebooted *Sabre Wulf* would be a hit and mark the resurrection of Sabreman as a major IP on other platforms. Unfortunately, the game wasn't the big seller they hoped for and our pith-helmeted hero was retired once more, with a Sabreman game in development for the Xbox but cancelled in 2005. "*Sabre Wulf* on the GBA was probably the closest *Mire Mare* ever got to release," observes Trevor.

So that really does conclude the investigation. There truly is no finished *Mire Mare* code sitting on an old drive in a dusty cupboard at Rare HQ. For those Sabreman fans and Ultimate aficionados who live in hope of one day finding this 'holy grail', the trail ends here.

Special thanks to Frank Gasking, Jarrod Bentley, Chris Bourne and the Ultimate/Rare employees, past and present, who offered up information.



» Former Rare programmer Trevor Attwood quizzed Tim Stamper about the *Mire Mare* mystery.



» The 'Land of Ultimatum' map shows where *Mire Mare* would have most likely taken place.



Super Soccer

COME ON, REF!

» RETROREVIVAL

» SNES
» HUMAN ENTERTAINMENT
» 1991

Whenever I visited my SNES-owning mate for an after-school gaming session on his new console, following a few heated battles on *Street Fighter II* it was always *Super Soccer* that we'd play into the early evening.

I remember its odd perspective taking a bit of getting used to initially – the camera was always fixed in the same low position for the whole 90 minutes of play, meaning that for one half you were forced to run up a football pitch you couldn't actually see. But what now seems slightly flawed at the time I remember felt really cool and immersive. I also distinctly recall that occasionally several players would fall under your control and perform the same action like synchronised swimmers, and later matches in its tournament mode were always hair-pulling.

My most indelible memory of playing *Super Soccer*, though, was when my mate and I finally beat Germany as England to take the world championship trophy. Or so we thought. After this particularly maddening session, which involved countless resets and password re-entry, we finally scraped a 1-0 victory. Those final seconds I remember being the most tense and nail-biting of our lives.

The end sequence then played out, showing our team ready to receive the trophy from the game's equivalent of the FIFA president, but then something really bizarre happened. A football struck the president's head like a sniper's bullet, causing him to toss the trophy skyward for it to land in the hands of the referee, who then does a runner with it. The team look on in astonishment before three players give chase. When they catch up to him, the ref declares that if they want the trophy back they'll have to play his team to find out who the real world champion is. They go simply by the name 'Nintendo' and dress in black to look all evil.

It was at this point my mate and I turned to each other in a joint state of bewilderment and disgust, robbed of our ultimate victory. Nevertheless, we composed ourselves, played them, and got soundly thrashed. It was a short while after that we decided to take up *Super Tennis*. ✱


4
10







A HISTORY OF CONTROVERSY

FROM RUBBER BREAST-LIKE CONTROL SYSTEMS TO LEAKING HOT COFFEE AND DISMEMBERING OPPONENTS, WE TAKE A LOOK AT THE GAMES THAT BECAME INFAMOUS FOR CAUSING A BIT OF A STIR.

GOTCHA

The game

A two-player head-to-head game, *Gotcha*'s gameplay basically boils down to virtual tag. One player (a square) must catch another (a plus sign) in a constantly maze playing-field that constantly shifts.

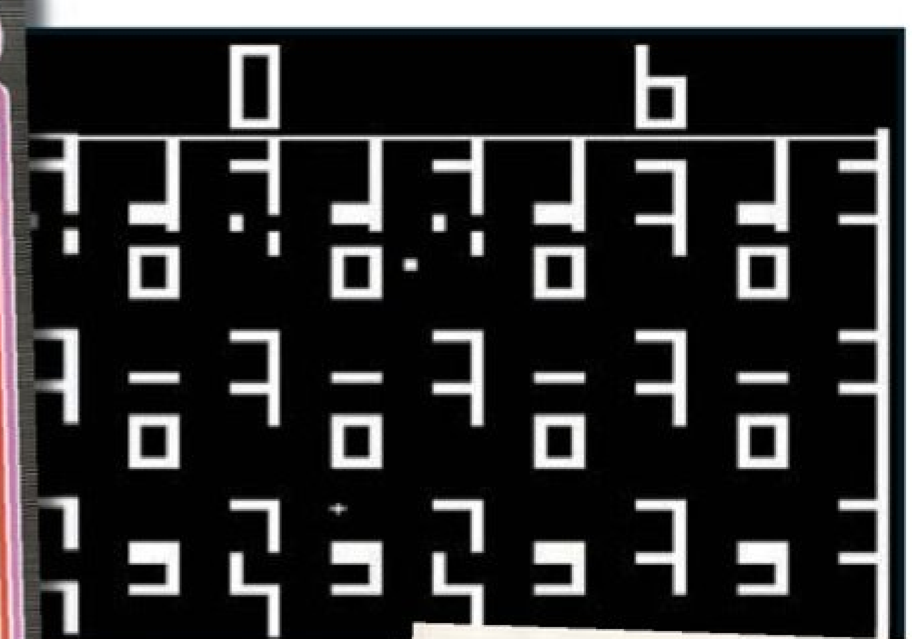
The issues

Well, boobies basically, as well as that pretty dodgy cover. Known internally at Atari as 'the boob game', *Gotcha* sparked controversy because of its titillating control system: a pair of pink rubber domes. The rumour is that the control concept came about to counterbalance the rise (titter) of the phallic joystick. It didn't work, and the game became a bit of a flop.

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING PG



» The promo work also gave the game a slightly sinister tone.



DEATH RACE

The game

Loosely based on the cult movie *Death Race 2000*, players raced up the screen and earned points for mowing down gremlins that gave off a little scream and turned efficiently into gravestones when killed.

The issues

The graphics of *Death Race* looked so basic that many believed it was fleeing pedestrians you were running over. The game thus sparked a fair bit of media attention, and even found itself involved in a feature on *60 Minutes* about the psychology of videogame players. It didn't help that at one stage its working title was *Pedestrian*, although the very first title was *Demolition Derby*. Had it been *Gremlin Motor Massacre*, Exidy might have been okay.

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 15



» Skeletor certainly had a right to get upset about *Death Race*, but he's a fictional character, and a bad egg.



CHILLER

The game

Players assume the role of a torturer as they make their way through dungeons, shooting helpless naked humans wearing S&M get-up, strapped to torture devices.

The issues

Just take a look at the screenshots. Naked bodies that exposed blood and bones when shot at, and more torture devices than you can shake a *Saw* box set at. It's practically *Hostel: The Videogame*. *Chiller* saw a limited release and sold poorly in the US. Despite its mature content though, it did find itself ported to the NES, albeit after a little bit of sanitising.

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 15



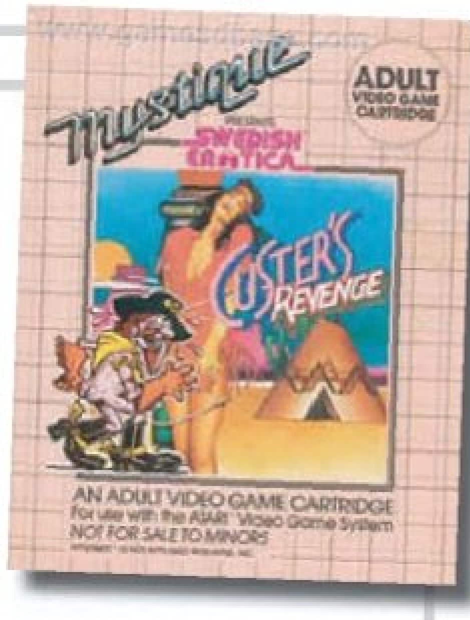


» [Arcade] You certainly get a sense that Exidy went into making *Chiller* with its eyes open.

CONTROVERSY KEY

VIOLENCE · LAW BREAKING · DISMEMBERMENT · DRUGS · PROFANITY · HORROR · SEX

CUSTER'S REVENGE



The game

You play cavalry man Custer (widely thought to be George Armstrong Custer) sporting just a cavalry hat, boots and an erection. The aim is to get Custer from one side of the screen to other, avoiding enemy arrows, so he can have sex with a Native American woman bound to a post.

The issues

This notorious 2600 game came under fire from various activist groups, who argued it was nothing more than a crass and tasteless rape simulator. They tried to get the game banned, and after receiving so many complaints about the game, Atari even tried to sue the game's creator, Mystique, who insisted it was consensual. What's just as shocking is that this rubbish sold for $50 bucks and 80,000 people actually bought it.

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 18



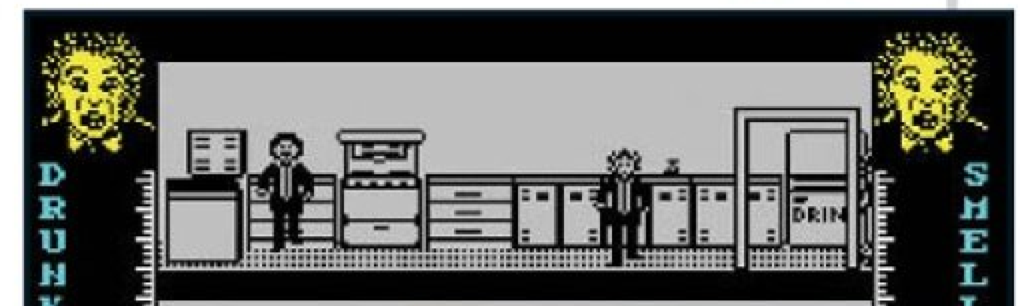
HOW TO BE A COMPLETE BASTARD

The game

In a house full of pretentious and irritating yuppies, you must offend and upset to achieve 'complete bastard' status with everyone.

The thorny issues

Despite starring a character who could get drunk, brew potent life-threatening farts, water shrubs with pee, and drink bleach and die, *How To Be A Complete Bastard*'s anarchic gameplay actually avoided controversy following its original 1987 release. The game kicked up a crapstorm four years later when *Amstrad Action* and *Your Sinclair* gave the full game away on cover tapes. Being a full free game with the word bastard in the title, naturally most kids loaded up the game up and thought it was the most hilarious thing they'd ever played. There were however a vocal number of *Amstrad Action* readers who were less impressed with the free gift, and decided to make their feelings known with angry letters and phone calls, some of which *AA* printed. It didn't help matters that the controversial cover tape also included a playable demo of Image Works' *Predator 2*.





RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING PG

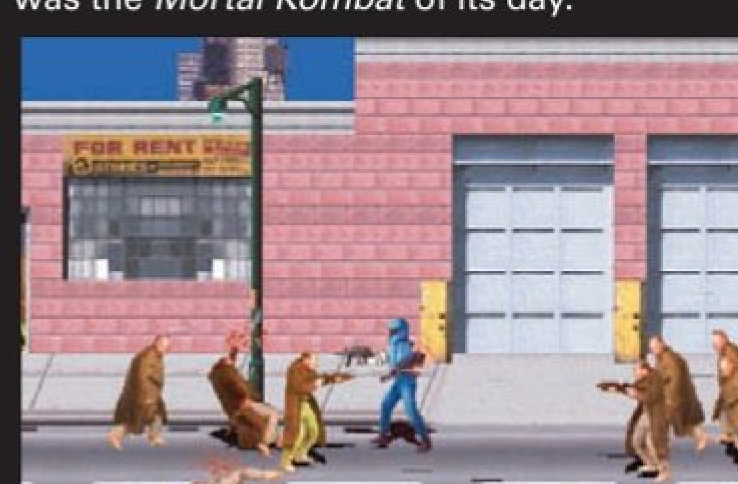
NARC

The game

Two tough cops try to clean up the streets by taking down a drug trafficking organisation and its powerful kingpin.

The issues

NARC's mature drug-themed story, digitized sprites and comic violence – shooting criminals with rockets caused them to explode into a shower of blood and appendages, caused controversy. *NARC* is one of the first popular arcade games to really stray from violence being performed in whimsical worlds by cartoonish heroes. It was the *Mortal Kombat* of its day.





EUGENE JARVIS ON THE CONTROVERSY OF NARC



With *NARC*, did you deliberately set out to make a controversial videogame?

We were trying to make a splash and push the limits of the cop game genre with photorealistic characters, animations, and effects. We wanted to go full-blown Hollywood, to contrast with the cartoony style of the day. Violence has always been a big part of video games. Kill the green aliens in *Space Invaders*. Cannibalise your enemies in *Pac-Man*. Smash the cute turtles in *Mario*. We wanted to take the tradition to live action. Also the war on drugs was heating up with the "Just Say No" campaign, so we added a vigilante twist to it with "Just Say No or DIE!"

Do you think the controversy of *NARC* was blown out of proportion, considering the violence in today's games?

You have to see it in the reference of the times. I was watching HBO last night and their mainstream shows are more pornographic than the notorious porno hit *Deep Throat*. *NARC* is fairly tame compared to today's zombie bloodfests. In fact, a couple of years later, scenes from *NARC* were included in the PG movie *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. So by then *NARC* was mainstream, and *Mortal Kombat* was the new bad boy on the block. Finish Him!!

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 15

BARBARIAN: THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR

The game

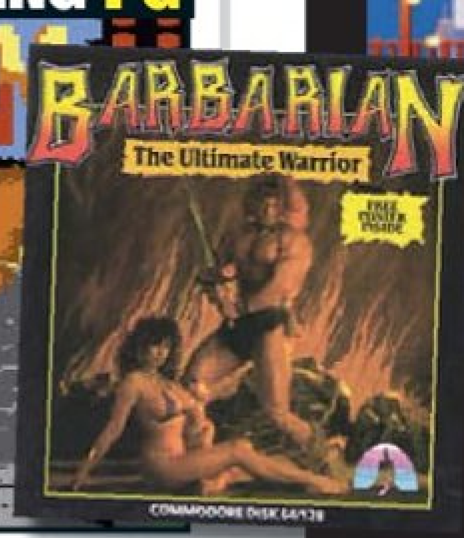
A sword-waving Conan-type fights to rescue a princess from an evil wizard, but to do so he must first defeat the mage's eight barbarian guards.

The issues

The saucy cover art, which saw Wolf from *Gladiators* having his leg caressed by page three model Maria Whittaker, caused a bit of a stir, as did the fact that you could behead your opponent. Beheading and glamour models – red rag stuff for gaming in the Eighties. We still love the cover, Eighties kitsch and all, though we'd prefer to cut out Wolf and replace him with an image of Jet…

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING PG





SINTENDO

Think Nintendo machines are a haven for wholesome family games? Think again…

DEVIL WORLD

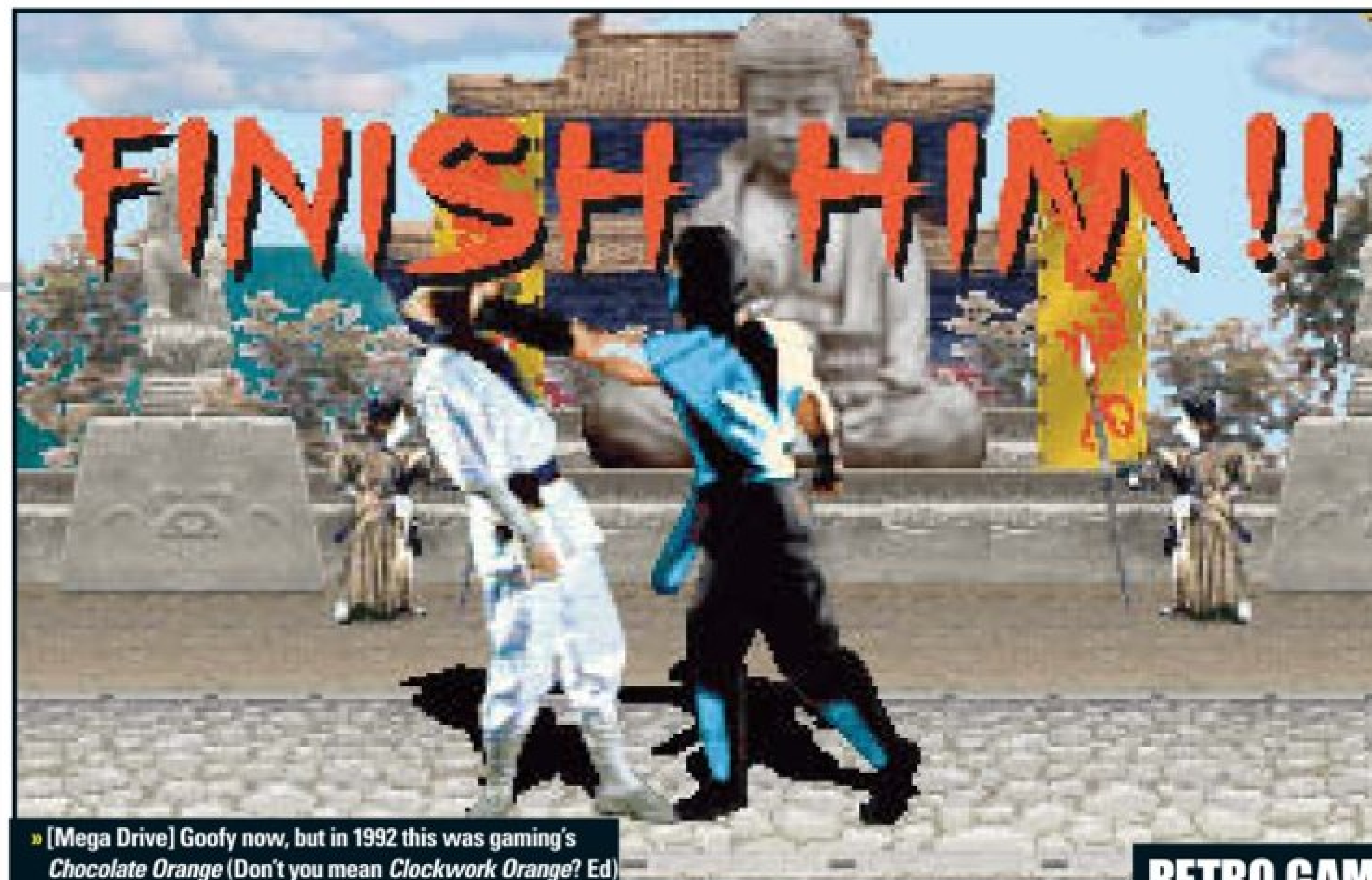
Due to Nintendo Of America's strict policy surrounding the use of religious icons in videogames at the time, *Devil World* holds the useless honour of being the only Miyamoto-designed game to have never been released in North America. You assume the role of a cute dragon that must run around collecting crosses, dots and bibles in a maze.

BIONIC COMMANDO (NES)

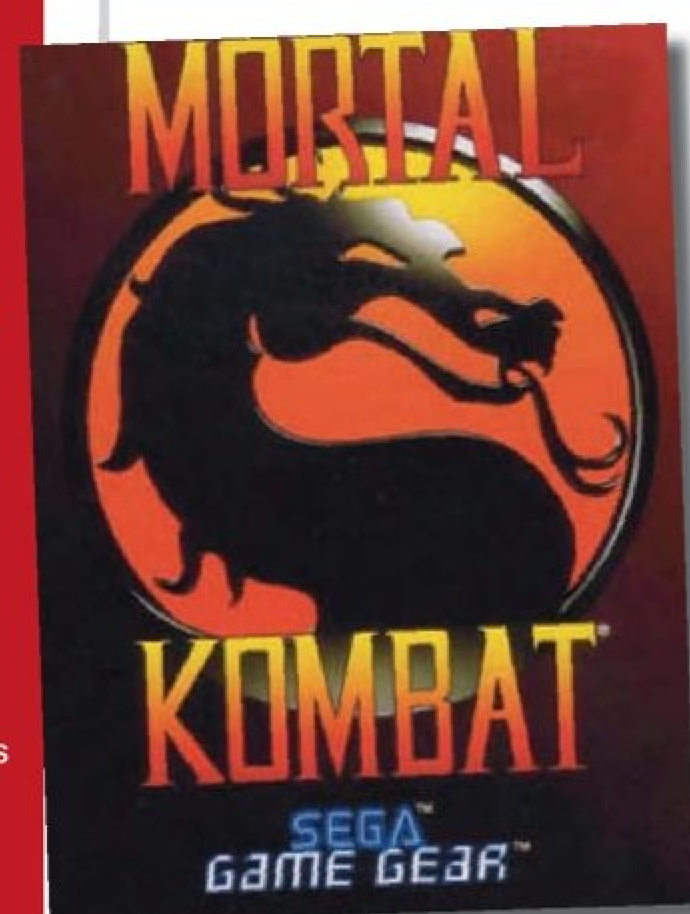
Nazi symbolism and references in the Japanese version, which was named *Top Secret – Hitler's Revival*, were removed from the international release. This included swastikas, the enemy army coming from a neo-Nazi nation, and the final boss being a reanimated Adolf Hitler. Although the end sequence did remain untouched, which shows the revived dictator's head exploding in gory fashion.

MADWORLD

Playing a chainsaw-wielding bounty hunter, *MadWorld* asked players to kill in the most imaginative, colourful and brutal ways they could. Though more blood gets spilled in this game then perhaps in any other in this feature, with its stylised black and white visuals giving its visuals a clear graphic novel look, and silly mini-games, the violence is clearly done in a comical way.



» [Mega Drive] Goofy now, but in 1992 this was gaming's *Chocolate Orange* (Don't you mean *Clockwork Orange*? Ed)



MORTAL KOMBAT

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 18

The game

Three fighters are selected to represent Earth in a deadly tournament that has been set up by an evil sorcerer from a fantasy realm.

The issues

While *Street Fighter*'s violence was done in a pretty cartoonish manner, with larger than life characters, chipper music and bright colours, *Mortal Kombat* took a different approach. It featured photorealistic sprites, foreboding music, and a dour palette of colours that drew attention to the copious amounts of red spray its combat created – typified of course by gory finishing moves it dubbed "Fatalities". It wasn't until the arcade game started appearing in homes, and parents saw the delight on little Jimmy's face at perfecting the fiddly to pull off Fatalities, that the media and parents began decrying it for its violence.



NIGHT TRAP

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 15

The game

You play a security guard tasked with protecting girls from vampire intruders. With hidden cameras in each room, you oversee the action and stop the girls coming to harm by setting off traps. Think *Home Alone* meets *Funny Games* and you're pretty much there.

The issues

While you are clearly trying to protect the women, who for some reason can't protect themselves, some felt *Night Trap*'s plot was also encouraging violence towards them. *Night Trap* found itself one of the games in the middle of the Senate Judiciary and Government Affairs Committee hearing in 1993, along with *Mortal Kombat, Lethal Enforcers* and *Doom*, which ultimately led to the forming of the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) in 1994. In retrospect, the actual threat is fairly tame. You see no nudity or violence, just more visible pink flesh and nightgowns than in your average game, plus some chasing and grabbing. Games with photorealistic visuals always seem to create the most controversy (*NARC, Mortal Kombat*), and *Night Trap* had some of the best seen in a game about saving girls in their nighties from dopey attackers. Due to the relatively sexy/sexist content, it was always going to cause a bit of a stir on its release.





» [Sega CD] Thriller of cheap thrills?







DOOM

The game

A dishonoured space marine gets posted to Mars only to find that its surface is populated by demons as a result of secret experiments that have literally caused all hell to break loose.

The issues

Doom was popular for a great many things over its violence. Its immersive 3D graphics, satisfying weapons, imaginative and creepy creature designs, helped popularise multiplayer gaming and was partially free to play. But its violence and satanic themes caused it to be criticised by religious groups on its release. It also came under intense fire from the media following the tragic Columbine School shooting in 1999, when it was discovered that the two perpetrators of the massacre were avid players of the game.

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 18

JOHN ROMERO ON THE CONTROVERSY OF DOOM

Did you receive much in the way of complaints or bad press?

We did see reviews that talked about the violence, but not many that condemned it. We had religious groups upset about *Doom*'s subject matter, but that didn't make us change what we were doing. Our usual response was for people who objected to the game to *not play it*, or let their kids play it.

Do you think the controversy was justified?

Controversy is always a sign of the times. Long ago, comic books were scandalous. So was dancing suggestively. In the future, it'll be controversial for someone to wear transparent clothing in public, but after that it'll be commonplace. Who knows?

ROAD RASH

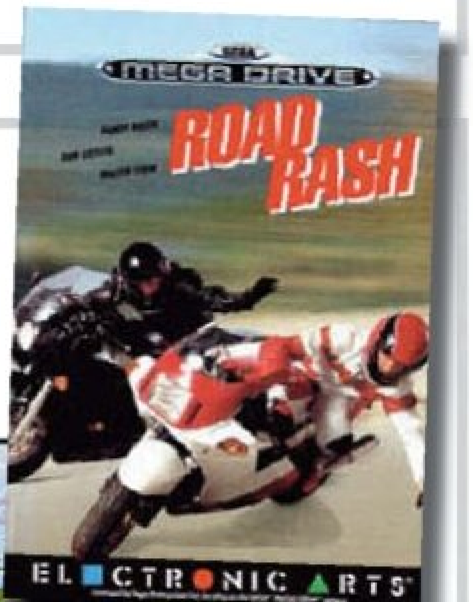
The game

Electronic Arts spliced the racing with the beat-'em-up genre, with a brutal take on *Super Hang-On* which saw thrill-seeking bikers race to the finish line using both racing skill and fists.

The issues

The racing involved breaking the law, avoiding arrest, driving recklessly and basically behaving in a way that in the real world would see you banned from even saying the word 'bike'. But while causing a rival to come off their bike and smear themself across the tarmac still provokes the odd wince today, the brutality of *Road Rash* is all done in a slapstick light – no blood is seen or bone breakages heard. The most controversial thing in it is probably the law-breaking.

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 12A







DUKE NUKEM 3D

The game

Brash, machismo hero Duke Nukem returns to Earth to discover that aliens have taken over the city of Los Angeles. As the aliens mutate the city's police force into swine and enslave the women, Duke becomes Earth's last hope.

The issues

Banned in Germany, Brazil and (at one time) Australia, *Duke 3D*'s sexist humour and soft pornographic themes were at the centre of sparking the controversy. Though *Leisure Suit Larry* was arguably the first widely recognised un-PC gaming character, the gunplay and first-person perspective, which put you right into the Duke's mighty boots and his lewd world, had a far greater effect on the media social groups at the time. 3D Realms released censored and parental lock versions of the game to tone down and block the sensitive content in the game to grant it release in certain countries.

SCOTT MILLER ON THE CONTROVERSY OF DUKE NUKEM 3D



With *Duke Nukem 3D*, did you deliberately try to shock?

To a point, yes. We were trying to push limits. And because we owned the IP and didn't have to take orders from a publisher, we were able to do what we wanted, content-wise. Controversy creates buzz. Plus, we wanted to be unique, and adding strippers and foul language definitely put *Duke* in, um, virgin territory for that time in gaming.

How did you respond to criticism at the time?

Pioneers must always expect a few arrows in the back. But looking back now, it's all so tame. For the most part, we ignored criticism. It's not like we were going to change the game or remove it from shelves, after all. Elvis was heavily criticised when he became popular, as were The Beatles. Aren't we all glad they ignored criticism?

Do you think the reaction was unreasonable?

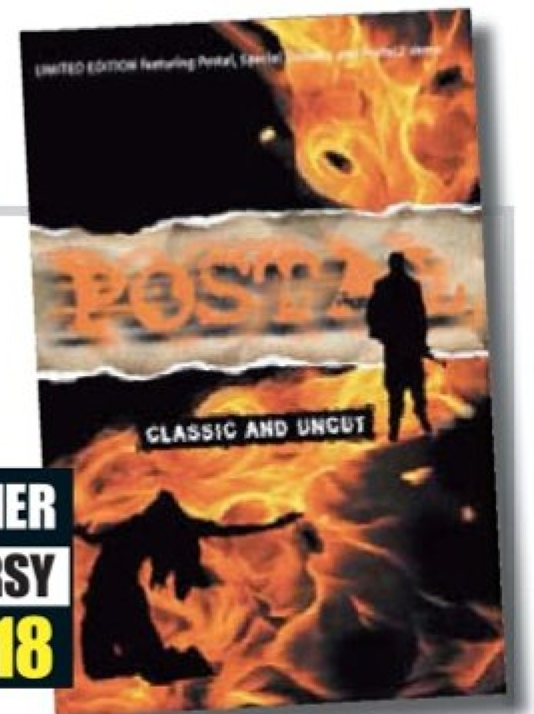
Absolutely, it was just a small, somewhat vocal group, looking for a reason to get bent out of shape. They've since moved on to the next 30 things over the years.

Do you think bad publicity is often more advantageous to a game's success than good?

I don't think bad publicity is good. But controversy can be, because controversy draws attention. We never saw much bad publicity for *Duke 3D* – the game mostly got stellar ratings. But it also generated a lot of press discussing the controversial elements, both good (we were breaking new ground) and bad (we crossed the line). This is what you want to do with controversy: start a discussion about something. If you accomplish that, you've done your job well.

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 18

POSTAL



RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 18

The game

A blue-collar worker goes on a violent shooting rampage in his town after he comes home to find his house is being repossessed.

The issues

It was the premise of *Postal* that sparked controversy, as there is no clear explanation as to the motive of the main character. He just arrives home one day to find his house padlocked and police waiting with a removal van, leaving the player to draw their own conclusion as to why he 'goes postal'. One explanation that has been linked to the game is that he learns of a conspiracy that threatens humanity and feels that he must kill everyone in the town to stop it. *Postal* was reportedly banned in ten countries, and the controversy it sparked included the US Postal Service filing a suit against the developers of the game. The case was dismissed before reaching court.



MANHUNT

The game

A death row inmate wakes from sedation and learns that he's become the lead character in a sick snuff movie. To earn his freedom, the inmate has to slaughter his way through a city of dangerous convicts and gangs, as a sadistic director captures everything on CCTV cameras.



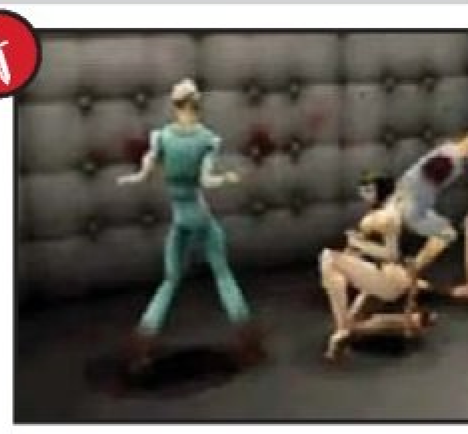
The issues

The game has you sneaking around in the shadows and performing violent executions, including one which allowed the player to cause suffocation to an enemy gang member with a plastic bag. Though the violence in *Manhunt* is graphic and not for the faint of heart, it is a unique, well-designed and innovative stealth title. Its grim grainy art style, and the option to play it in silence with a microphone and try not to draw unwanted attention to your actions, all added to the thick and richly unpleasant atmosphere its designers were clearly trying to create. *Manhunt* was banned in Germany, Australia and New Zealand, and in Ontario Canada it became the first videogame to be classified as a film.

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 18



THRILL KILL





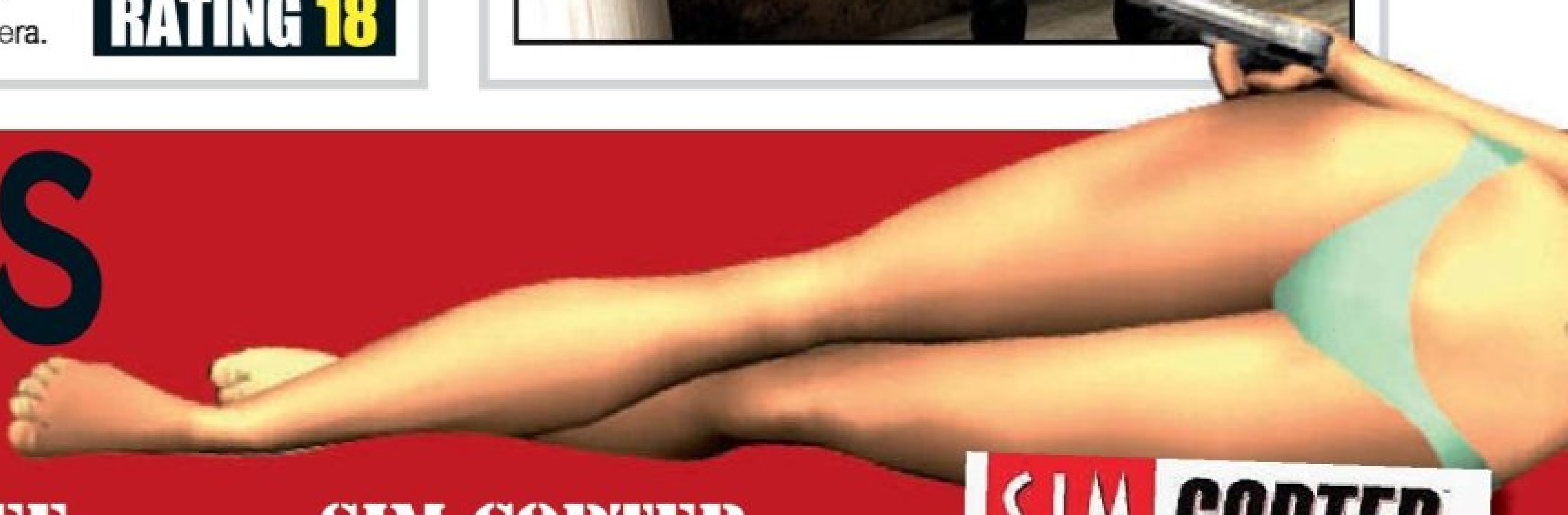
The game

The souls of ten unpleasant dead people are pitted against one another in a fighting tournament set up by a very bored goddess. The prize for the winner: the chance to escape hell and get reincarnated.

The issues

Though notable for innovative four-way fighting, it was *Thrill Kill*'s strong sexual and violent content which saw it gain column inches before it got canned by EA after it purchased Virgin Interactive. Its character roster featured a murdering postal worker, a sadistic judge, and a redneck cannibal who died of tapeworms – and they're the ones with less disturbing backgrounds. *Thrill Kill* hoped to emulate the success of *Mortal Kombat*, and did so by replacing the traditional energy bar for a fatality meter that filled up through landing successful attacks. Once filled, the bar offered fighters the chance to perform a 'thrill kill' on an opponent, usually a series of grim finishing moves that involved dismemberment and head punting to camera.

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 18



HOT MODS

We look at some cheeky gaming tweaks and discoveries made by PC coders

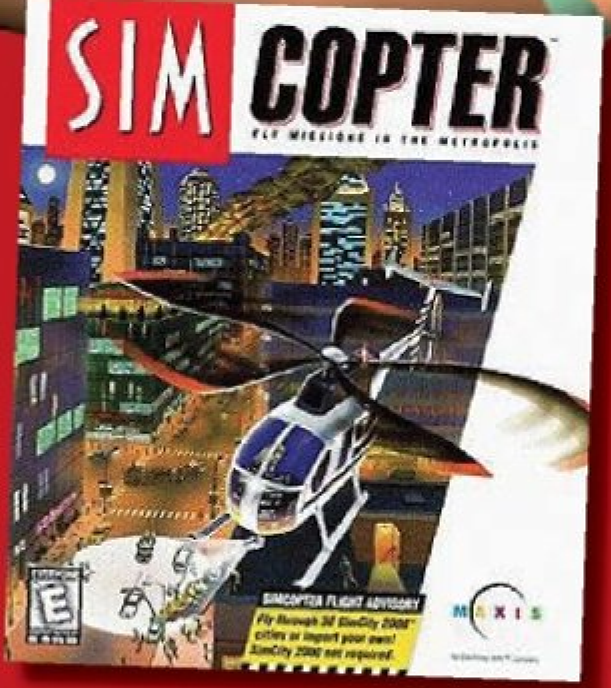


HOT COFFEE

In 2005, Dutch modder Patrick Wildenborg released a patch that reactivated a controversial mini-game in *GTA: San Andreas* that saw the game's protagonist, CJ, indulging in a bit of how's yer father. Though no nudity is seen, it still sparked a huge amount of controversy in the US and has reported to have cost Rockstar somewhere in the region of $25 million dollars in recalls, damages and the distribution of a patch to remove the offending content.

SIM COPTER

Put there by designer Jacques Servin, this Easter Egg in *Sim Copter* saw men with fluorescent nipples (making them visible from the skies) dressed in swimming trunks flocking to areas of the city to make out en mass on certain dates in the game. Servin was fired when the content was discovered and has since stated his actions were partly a response to the intolerable working conditions he said he experienced at Maxis at the time.



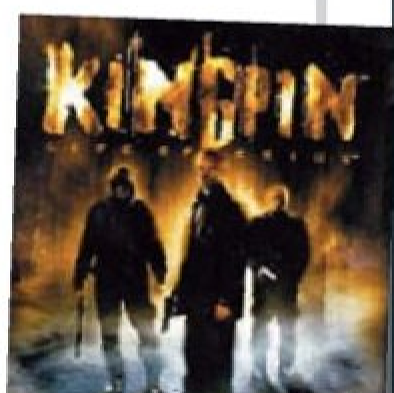
KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME

The game

A spurned thug climbs the ranks of gang hierarchy in a violent city. Following a nasty beating ordered by the city's kingpin, he plots his revenge by enlisting the help of other thugs.

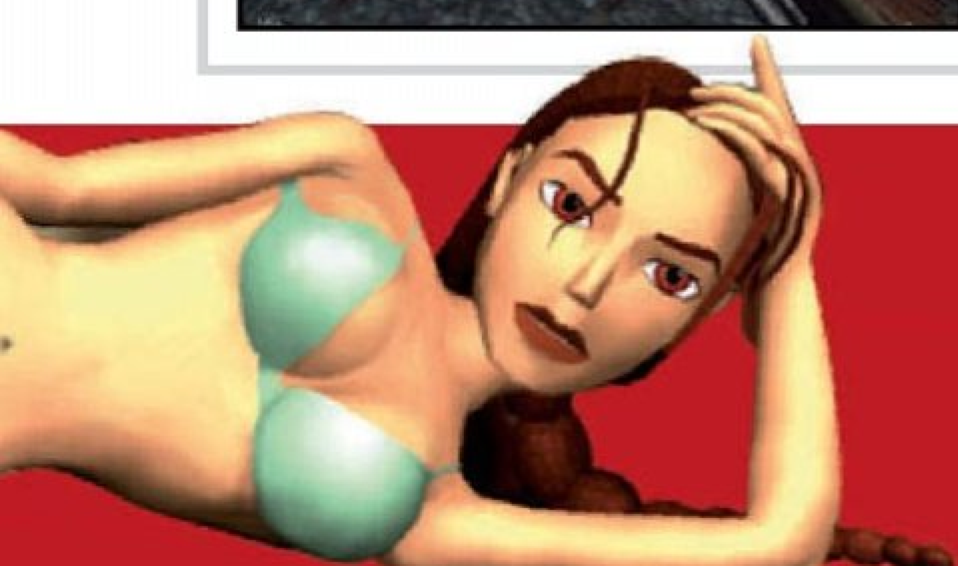
The issues

The first high-profile FPS release to follow in the wake of the tragic Columbine School Massacre, *Kingpin* garnered instant press attention for its violent and mature content. This included lots of colourful language, the ability to inflict area-specific damage on character models, which also featured skin that could bruise and bleed, and the ability to form gangs by hiring NPC thugs. Following pressure by lobby groups in the US, the controversy led to various retailers, including WalMart and Toys 'R' Us, deciding against stocking it the county. Though the game was intensely violent, Kingpin's creator Xatrix was clear that it was aimed squarely at adults. The game brandished an 18 cert badge on its box and a warning message during install to spell out the developer's intended target audience for the game.



RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 18





NUDE RAIDER PATCH

It was inevitable that gaming's first noticeably female lead would become targeted by programmers wanting to remove what little clothes she was wearing. Nude Raider did exactly what you'd expect. It was a patch that could be applied to the early PC games to get poor Ms Croft running, swinging and blasting around tombs – and fighting grizzly bears and dinosaurs – in the nuddy.

GRAND THEFT AUTO

The game

A posse of thugs try to make money and a name for themselves doing paid jobs for opposing crime syndicates running things in three crime-rife cities.

The issues

Putting you in the shoes of a fledgling career criminal, *GTA* naturally rewarded you for performing unlawful acts. These 'missions' ranged from performing revenge attacks and assassinations, to car jacks and killing sprees. But the world of *GTA* surprisingly isn't a dour, glum feeling one though, but a bright vibrant comical one. Most of the missions have a wry comical tone, or feel influenced by popular culture (the *Speed*-style bomb bus mission for instance), something that established the sense of satire and humour the franchise is also known and popular for today. With hindsight, the violence in the game is no more graphic than say *Smash TV* or *Cannon Fodder*, the difference is it adds vehicles and adult themes, the latter of which can be there on account of the 18 certificate on its box.



RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 18



BRIAN BAGLOW ON THE CONTROVERSY OF GRAND THEFT AUTO



Was it your deliberate intention to make a controversial videogame?

Not at all. Originally the player was going to be a policeman. The decision to change the game so the player could run amok was a gameplay decision. Nothing to do with courting controversy. Everything in the original game was designed, developed and changed with one aim in mind – making the game fun. The idea of making it controversial never entered the picture. There was no pressure from the publisher, no expectation internally that we wanted to make something to shock. We just wanted to make a great game we could be proud of.

Did you receive much in the way of complaints at the time?

Yes, once the title hit the market, the media more or less exploded, decrying the game, expressing indignation and outrage and generally letting us have it for contributing to the collapse of western civilisation and the end of all morals. It shocked a lot of people because, during development, the focus was on the gameplay and getting the game to play well. The idea we were creating something 'edgy' missed a lot of the team. We responded very honestly. We didn't think the game was ultra-violent. A little black-humoured certainly, but absolutely not the moral vacuum it was being portrayed as in the media. Plus, the bottom line was that it had an 18 certificate, so it wasn't even aimed at kids. We laughed at it mostly. The politicians, the journalists, the editors and the media as a whole, not one of them had played the game, not one of them had any real idea what it was all about, so why take them seriously?

THE MAKING OF CARMAGEDDON

"BAN DEATH GAME NOW: POPE" RAN THE TABLOID HEADLINES ON CARMAGEDDON'S RELEASE. THAT'S TIM POPE MP, NOT HIS HOLINESS. WITH A BRAND NEW INCARNATION OF THE SERIES ON ITS WAY, MIKE BEVAN EXPLORES THE CREATION OF ONE OF GAMING'S BIGGEST CONTROVERSIES

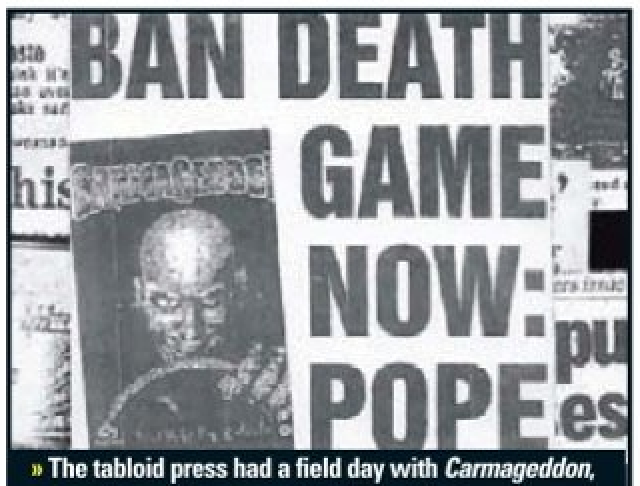


IN THE KNOW

- **» PUBLISHER:** SCI/INTERPLAY
- **» DEVELOPER:** DOS, MAC, PLAYSTATION, N64
- **» RELEASED:** 1997
- **» PLATFORM:** ARCADE, PLAYSTATION
- **» GENRE:** DRIVING

The leafy, pastoral environs of the Isle of Wight seem an unlikely birthplace for what some have labelled the most controversial game of all time, and 15 years after its release the media frenzy around Stainless Games' 'alternative' racer remains memorable, if a little perplexing. Although sandbox driving games like *Burnout Paradise* are now commonplace, at the time of *Carmageddon*'s inception, the idea of a 3D racing game with an open world approach was something exciting and new. It was only after inspiration from an iconic Seventies sci-fi flick and the addition of a few harmless pedestrians that the trouble started.

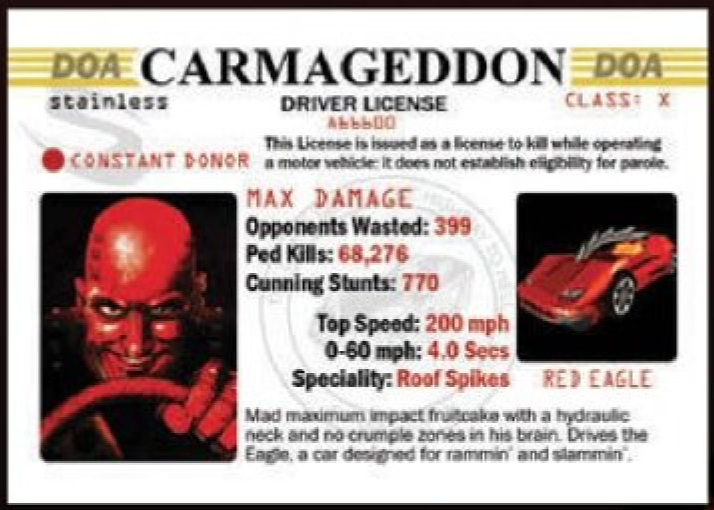
"Back in the early Nineties, I bumped into my old schoolmate Patrick Buckland at a banger racing event he was competing in," begins Stainless co-founder Neil 'Nobby' Barnden. "He was programming and I was an artist, so we began working together on an idea he'd had for a 3D destruction derby game that would feature real-time crumpling cars and a novelty feature, the 'PratCam' – a PIP camera showing the driver's comedy reactions to the action. We made a demo featuring these elements and that got us a contract with publisher SCi to develop the game. Soon, the brief changed because SCi were pursuing the licence for a proposed sequel to *Death Race 2000*. When that fell through, we decided to stick with the 'points for pedestrians' theme, and I coined a new name, *Carmageddon*. And that's how the game came to be…"



» The tabloid press had a field day with *Carmageddon*, cooking up all manner of lurid headlines.

Carmageddon introduced a number of features previously unseen in PC games, which Neil rightly remains proud of. "We were pushing the technical boundaries from the start," he explains. "No one had achieved the feat of creating large, open world environments, full of physics accessories and fully deformable vehicles, all driven by an accurate 3D physics engine. Everything that happened in the world, including the physics interactions, had to also work backwards, because we implemented a full action replay system. It was all highly ambitious and ended up really pushing the PC hardware of the time. All of this was rendered using an engine by Argonaut called BRender, which was hardly ideal, but free because we'd done some work for Argonaut.

"As I recall, we agreed what the levels would consist of City, Countryside, Industrial, Desert, Snowy, and our lead artist Terry Lane produced a set of digital concept paintings – and they were pretty much the sole springboard that the levels developed from. It was quite conceptual and imaginative; we didn't go out to get specific reference for any of the levels, which is probably what gives them the somewhat surreal, quirky character that they have. I remember building the city track as one enormous level. We soon realised that it just wouldn't be loadable, so I broke it into the three separate Bleak City areas. The layout of the streets, the landmarks within those areas… They really just grew out of a flat plane in 3D Studio, that I extruded and features appeared."



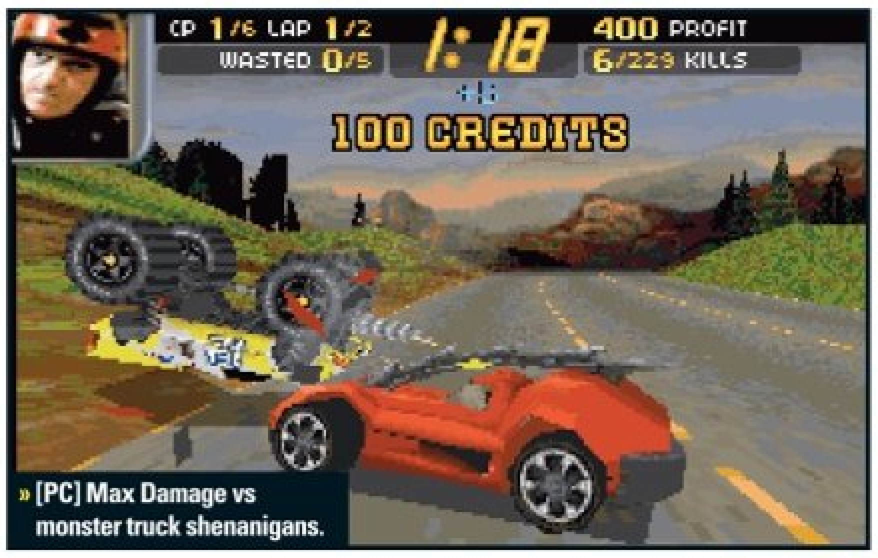
Neil acknowledges that the ambitious nature of the project caused the eight-strong team at Stainless a few teething problems during the game's 15-month gestation. "These were the pioneering days of 3D games," he admits. "We had to do our training, teaching ourselves how to do things on the job. We didn't have any problem



» [PC] That's gotta smart.



» [PC] Earn extra style bonuses for doing cool stuff…



» [PC] Max Damage vs monster truck shenanigans.





THE RESURRECTION OF CARMAGEDDON

Why use Kickstarter to fund the new game, *Carmageddon: Reincarnation*?
Well, it suddenly appeared as the new hope for indie developers, keen to avoid having to put their IP up as collateral in a deal with a publisher or investor. It offers a real alternative, and an interesting way to interact closely with your customers in developing the product they're paying for directly. It has been an enlightening experience though; none of us could have predicted how much work it would be to plan, execute, and manage – a process that we're still right in the midst of, and is all-consuming for those of us running the campaign.

How difficult has it been securing the rights?
Not difficult, just slow, and rather painful on the company wallet.

What new mechanics are you hoping to introduce?
We will be introducing new challenges, achievements and so on – but really, the point of *Reincarnation* is to remake the classic game, updating it so that it can be the game we would have loved to be able to make back in the day. So, because the fundamentals of the gameplay weren't broken, we won't be going out of our way to change them.

Why do you think *Carmageddon* remains so popular?
It endures because there's always a moment when you're driving and someone crosses the road in front of you, and you think, 'BRRRRMM! Yeah – 50 points!' *Carmageddon* took that little devil behind the wheel in us, and allowed us to let it loose in the safety of our own home.

with being creative; it was more a case of how we could translate the creativity into reality, using the technology at our disposal. Creating cars that consisted of the minimum number of polygons possible, each textured with a single 64x64 bitmap, was a real challenge, as they're the star of the show."

For such a potentially contentious title, Neil reveals a surprisingly hands-off relationship with their publisher. "SCi gave us our start in the industry, and we had a great relationship with them," he says. "They just let us get on with making the game, and really didn't interfere at all – apart from constructive criticism along the way. Each month, the producers would pop over to the island to see us. They'd say, 'How's it going?' We'd say, 'Great!' They'd look at the build, we'd have a laugh, and they'd go away for another month!"

The creative freedom offered by SCi allowed the team to break free from the traditional and somewhat stale racing game model. "From the outset, a mantra of the game was, 'Let the player do what the hell they want!'" says Neil. "However, Patrick in particular wanted the game to be the antithesis of the traditional racing game, so, the player was actively discouraged from actually racing around the level's tracks – and would find they had to go after pedestrians and opponents in order to get the time bonuses that came from collisions and pedestrian deaths."

> "The player would have to go after pedestrians to get time bonuses"

And what did Stainless make of the furore caused by the not-so-accidental demise of a few pedestrian bystanders in the tabloid papers? "Brilliant," retorts Neil. "And the *Daily Mail* has just repeated the same own goal by banging on about us bringing the game back again, on their website. If anything is going to pique the interest of gamers, it's the whiff of controversy around a game. Of course, the game has to be better than the sum of the controversy it whips up."

The media bandwagon-jumping escalated after the fatal crash of Princess Diana due to the unfortunate, if entirely coincidental, inclusion of a character called Die Anna in the game, which provided further ammunition for the *Daily Mail*. The controversy caused problems for Stainless when the BBFC famously refused to classify the game without alterations, with SCi finally securing a 15 certificate only after the removal of a significant portion of in-game gore. "I was amused but irritated by the delay to the launch of the game," comments Neil, "and the extra work that was caused by them insisting that we turn the pedestrians into zombies instead…"

With a reboot of *Carmageddon* in the works right now, and the original game recently re-released on iOS and Android devices, we ask Neil what he made of the somewhat cut-down versions that made their way onto other platforms than the PC back in the day. Did he approve of any? "There are no good *Carmageddon* ports!" he declares humorously. "Unfortunately, a game that severely stretched the capabilities of the PC was never going to either look good or play well on the consoles of the day. Of the bad ports, I'm led to understand that the N64 version is particularly hideous. Although one of our young game designers here at Stainless today remembers playing *Carma* on the PlayStation as a kiddy, and thinking it was ace…"



» [PC] Ladies and gentlemen, meet your drivers.

RETRO GAMER CONTROVERSY RATING 18


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FROM THE ARCHIVES

RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

Image Works

In the late Eighties, Mirrorsoft needed to change its image and attract a more youthful market. Richard Hewison reflects with former colleagues on the creation of Mirrorsoft's subsidiary publishing label, Image Works, and the games and influential talent that emerged

Mirror employee Jim Mackonochie founded Mirrorsoft on a shoestring budget in 1983, but the company really made an impression once Robert Maxwell bought the Mirror Group the following year. However, three years later Mirrorsoft was at a crossroads. Having concentrated on educational titles for longer than it probably should have, the 8-bit games market was very crowded, and Jim recognised that the 16-bit frontier would give Mirrorsoft the chance to gain an advantage. Because it also published more serious utilities and simulators, Mirrorsoft had an image problem with the more youthful games sector, and this was something Jim was keen to address.

"By then, Mirrorsoft had Cinemaware, FTL and the Spectrum Holobyte labels," Jim explains. "Education and business also went out under the Mirrorsoft label, which really wasn't associated with hardcore gaming, as, say, Ocean or US Gold were."

At the same time, the CD was due to forever change home computing, so Jim surrendered control of Mirrorsoft in early 1988 and set up a new Mirror Group company with the intention of creating pioneering multimedia CD-ROM titles.

"I believed that CD-ROM technology was the future for software media distribution," he recalls, "so Pergamon Compact Solution was set up for the professional and reference market, as well as to assist Mirrorsoft to get a head start by developing *Defender Of The Crown* for CD-ROM."

INSTANT EXPERT

Games manager John Cook recalls: "As the company became more successful, there was a 'sign-off committee' for new games. The most frustrating thing was having signed an option on what became *SimCity*, the collective decision was to pass on it because it was educational and would never sell. Our loss was Infogrames' gain!"

***Robozone* by Arc Developments** was based on a proposed TV series, combining stop-motion animation and live action. Image Animation, based at the famous Pinewood Studios near London, was behind the idea, created by Bob Keen, who had worked on the practical special effects for movies like *Return Of The Jedi*, *The Dark Crystal* and *Hellraiser*. Sadly, the proposal never got beyond a short proof-of-concept video, and so *Robozone* became a licensed game without a licence!

Mirrorsoft MD Peter Bilotta didn't like the *Xenon 2* artwork at all, and neither did many retailers. Thankfully, it didn't harm sales of the game!

Image Works had a number of games cancelled in mid-development, including the Amiga HAM mode platformer *Dynamic Debugger* (aka *DDT*) by John Knox, *Terrarium* from Splinter Vision and *Crime Town Depths* from Italian developer Emotion Software.

A new image

Despite this new workload, Jim remained chairman of Mirrorsoft and Spectrum Holobyte, keeping an eye on developments as he was setting up Compact Solution. A new managing director for Mirrorsoft was soon recruited from a rival publisher.

"I was personally headhunted by Robert and Kevin Maxwell and joined Mirrorsoft as MD in March 1988," says Peter Bilotta, who was previously the chief financial officer for Activision's European office. "I came in to revitalise the old-fashioned branding and market opinion of Mirrorsoft and develop a pure entertainment brand that would sit within the newly formed Maxwell Entertainment group of companies."

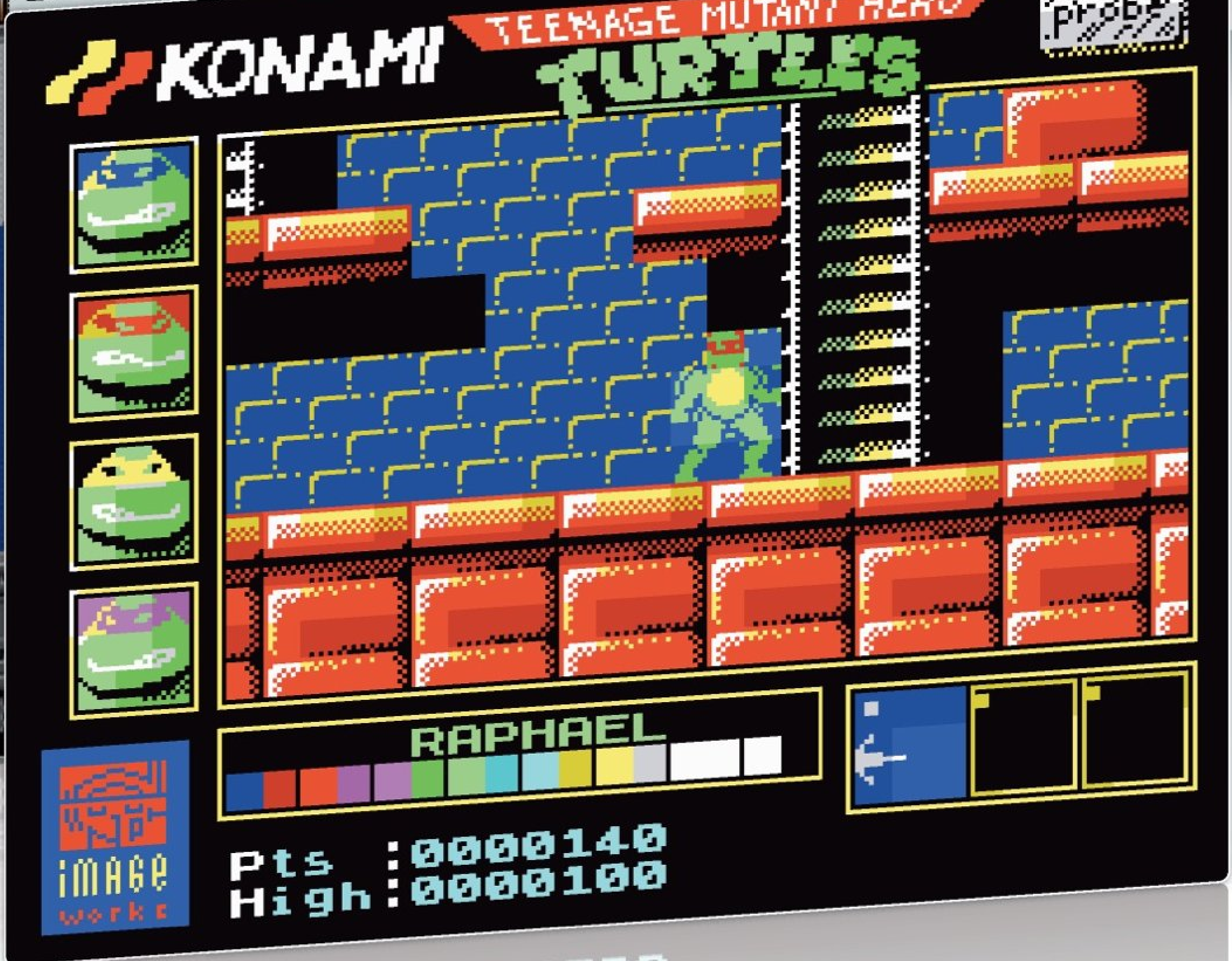
A new publishing label was therefore top of the agenda. After brainstorming the name for a few months during countless internal focus group meetings, Image Works emerged as the leading contender.

"I remember liking the name immediately, but it took some time to agree upon the final logo and colour scheme," says Peter. Among the Mirrorsoft marketing team was Alison Beasley, who remembers how the final logo came about.

"We hired a very expensive ad agency to come up with the design, and they did



TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES



“I came in to revitalise the old-fashioned branding and market opinion of Mirrorsoft”

PETER BILOTTA EXPLAINS THE REASONING BEHIND THE BIRTH OF THE IMAGE WORKS LABEL

the obvious and came back with pixels and a circuit board!” she laughs, recalling the highly stylised Image Works logo that adorned the packaging and adverts.

With a name, logo and style chosen, it was time to start finding the new talent that would get Image Works noticed. John Cook was games manager at Mirrorsoft, having previously been features editor for *Popular Computing Weekly*. It was his responsibility to find quality titles for the new label.

The first Image Works game was the European release of Maxis’ 16-bit debut, *Skychase*, for the ST, Amiga and IBM PC. Other launch titles included the quirky *Foxx Fights Back* from Denton Designs for the Commodore 64 and Spectrum, and a couple of games designed by David Bishop named *Bombuzal* and *Fernandez Must Die*.

“If I recall correctly, *Fernandez* needed some TLC,” explains Dene Lester, who had recently joined Mirrorsoft as a project manager. “We called in a third-party artist to improve the visuals. The game was so open that players found themselves getting lost and didn’t know where they were supposed to go next. We took a leaf from the *Ikari Warriors* coin-op and turned the game into a vertical scroller to keep the players focused, so going up the screen led to progress towards the next objective.”

With Atari ST and Spectrum versions in development, a familiar and legendary 8-bit programmer volunteered to write the Commodore 64 version.

“I got involved with Image Works on *Fernandez Must Die*,” explains Tony Crowther, who had previously written some of the early C64 classics including *Stop The Express*, *Potty Pigeon* and *Blagger*. The chance to work with designer David Bishop led to the creation of a couple of additional games, as Tony recalls. “I got talking to David, and he had ideas for other games, and I remember on a visit to his house we designed the first stages of *Bombuzal*, which we then completed on the Commodore 64 and handed to Image Works three weeks later.”

Bombuzal was a nice surprise for Mirrorsoft, signing the finished game on the spot for the Image Works label. The published version included additional levels designed by fellow game programming legends including Andrew Braybrook, Geoff Crammond, Jon Ritman and Jeff Minter.

“They then got my good friend Ross Goodley to write the ST version, and I got my first chance to play with 16-bit computers when I did the graphics,” adds Tony. Amiga and PC conversions followed, and *Bombuzal* even appeared on the SNES in Japan a few years later via Kemco.

“My next project was my last ever Commodore 64 game, a shoot-’em-up called *Phobia*,” continues Tony. He also wrote the Amiga version for Image Works, which was his 16-bit programming debut.

BY THE NUMBERS

Image Works published **3** film-licensed games: *Back To The Future Part II*, *Back To The Future Part III* and *Predator 2*. *Alien 3* would have been another, had IW survived.

Image Works lasted almost **4** years, from its foundation in early 1988 to the last day of 1991.

4 Bitmap Brothers titles were published by Image Works: *Speedball*, *Xenon 2*, *Speedball 2* and *Cadaver*.

Image Works published **4** coin-op conversions during its life: *Blasteroids*, *Passing Shot*, *Cisco Heat* and its biggest commercial hit, *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles*.

Image Works published **32** unique games in total.

Acclaim paid **£150,000** for the rights to the console titles when Mirrorsoft was in administration.

The *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles* tie-in hit at the top of the cartoon’s popularity, selling **420,000** copies on the Sinclair Spectrum in November 1990 alone.

FROM THE ARCHIVES


» Mirrorsoft shows off its wares at a trade show in September 1990.

TIMELINE

- **LATE 1987** — CHAIRMAN AND MD JIM MACKONOCHIE CONCLUDES THAT MIRRORSOFT NEEDS A MORE YOUTHFUL APPEAL
- **MARCH 1988** — PETER BILOTTA JOINS FROM ACTIVISION TO BECOME THE NEW MD OF MIRRORSOFT
- **SPRING 1988** — INTERNAL BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS DECIDE UPON IMAGE WORKS AS THE NEW PUBLISHING LABEL

Among the other Image Works launch titles was a futuristic sports game called *Speedball*. It was the first of four productions for Image Works by The Bitmap Brothers, which initially comprised Steve Kelly, Eric Matthews and Mike Montgomery. After the success of its debut 16-bit shoot-'em-up, *Xenon*, The Bitmap Brothers was considered a hot property, and *Speedball* further enhanced its reputation.

"We'd just finished doing *Xenon*, and Mastertronic asked us to do a game based on real tennis," explains Mike Montgomery. Having done a lot of research into the subject, they opted to approach the publisher with the idea of doing an original game design instead, which was rejected.

"So, we went down the pub and designed *Speedball* on the back of a fag packet!" says Mike. They took the idea to a raft of publishers including Hewson, Ocean and Mirrorsoft, where the game literally struck a chord with John Cook, who was practising his guitar while the Bitmap team pitched their future sports arcade game.

"I was very keen to sign *Speedball*," remembers John. "It was clearly a great game, and we beat a number of publishers to the punch to sign it."

Marketing guru Cathy Campos also remembers *Speedball* with much affection. "I loved doing the PR for that game!" she exclaims. "That's when we did that photo shoot of the Bitmaps in front of Robert Maxwell's helicopter," she adds, referring to an iconic photo of the three founding Bitmaps standing on the helipad on top of the Mirror Group building in London, with Maxwell's private helicopter behind them.

Speedball proved to be a terrific hit for Image Works, and it was quick to negotiate a new deal with The Bitmap Brothers that included *Xenon 2: Megablast*, *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* and a game called *Anneka*.

Mainframes and turtles

An exclusively 16-bit game called *Mainframe* was also announced at the Image Works launch, but it took another year before it was ready for publication. By late 1989, *Mainframe* had become *Interphase* and, co-designed by Image Works' Simon Knight and Dean Lester, this intriguing 3D game was coded by Adrian Stephens, Andy Beveridge and Martin Day, who became known as The Assembly Line.

"*Interphase* was the game I spent the most time on," reminisces Dean. "It all started when John Cook read William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and wanted to create a game based on it. The trouble was no one knew what kind of game could be designed around that world."

Dean was keen to work with programmer Adrian Stephens, who had a 16-bit 3D engine but no game. "After a lot of going around in circles, we developed the idea that there were two worlds – the real world and the world inside the computer system – and the computer was controlling a security system in the real world," says Dean. "You flew around in the cyberspace, altering the system to help your real-world counterpart break through the security."


» [Spectrum] *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles* was a massive success for Image Works.


» [Atari ST] *Skychase* from Maxis was among the first wave of Mirrorsoft games.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Peter Bilotta
After Mirrorsoft and Acclaim, Peter went to Interplay and was involved in the MBO that bought Virgin Interactive from Viacom, becoming joint CEO with Tim Chaney before selling the business to Titus Interactive 16 months later. Peter set up his own consultancy practice called Interactive Media Associates, working for various companies including Microsoft, Ubisoft, Namco and Square Enix. He has also helped a number of firms raise large funds, including IGA Worldwide and Zattikka.

Cathy Campos
After Mirrorsoft, Cathy worked for Bullfrog as PR manager. She then created her own PR company, Panache PR, specialising in electronic entertainment and representing game developers including big names like Lionhead Studios, Creative Assembly, Bungie and Media Molecule.

Simon Knight
Simon became director of a courier firm then worked for The Bitmap Brothers for many years, contributing to several titles, including designing *The Chaos Engine*. He then started his own computer consultancy called Transpeed, which he still runs today.

John Cook
John left Image Works to create his own agency named Bad Management in 1989, which is still going strong today, more than 20 years later. As senior partner, John represents a number of developers including the legendary Geoff Crammond, creator of the *Formula One Grand Prix* series, and the brilliant *Sentinel*.





Dean Lester
After leaving Image Works, Dean ran Teque Software in London. He later moved to the US, working at Disney and Sega before joining Microsoft in 1996 and staying for 14 years, where he was the general manager for Windows graphics and gaming technologies. Today Dean runs his own cloud-based medical imaging company.

Jason Kingsley
Jason is owner and CEO of Rebellion, which he founded in 1991 with his younger brother Chris. Initial titles included *Alien vs Predator*. Rebellion bought *2000 AD* in 2000, which gave it the rights to all characters from the comic, including Judge Dredd. Later it purchased Core Design and others, and is involved in books and film production.

- **SUMMER 1988** – IMAGE WORKS IS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED, WITH MANY LAUNCH TITLES REVEALED
- **AUTUMN 1988** – THE FIRST WAVE OF IMAGE WORKS TITLES ARE RELEASED FOR BOTH 8-BIT AND 16-BIT PLATFORMS
- **NOV 1988** – *SPEEDBALL* BECOMES IMAGE WORKS' FIRST HIT
- **MAR 1989** – IMAGE WORKS' FIRST COIN-OP CONVERSION, *BLASTEROIDS*, IS RELEASED
- **SUMMER 1989** – *XENON 2* IS RELEASED AND IS ANOTHER SUCCESS
- **SEPT 1989** – *BLOODWYCH* IS RELEASED FOR THE ST AND AMIGA
- **MAR 1990** – ROSS GOODLEY'S UNDERRATED *GRAVITY* IS PUBLISHED
- **OCT 1990** – *CADAVER* IS RELEASED, WITH *SPEEDBALL 2* ON THE ST NOT FAR BEHIND
- **NOV 1990** – *TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES* BECOMES IMAGE WORKS' BIGGEST EVER HIT
- **MAY 1991** – FILM LICENCE *PREDATOR 2* IS PUBLISHED
- **SEP 1991** – *BLADE WARRIOR* IS FINALLY RELEASED, OVER TWO YEARS AFTER IT WAS ANNOUNCED
- **OCT 1991** – SENSIBLE SOFTWARE'S *MEGA LO MANIA* IS PUBLISHED
- **OCT 1991** – MEV DINC'S *FIRST SAMURAI* IS PUBLISHED
- **NOV 5th 1991** – ROBERT MAXWELL DISAPPEARS AND IS LATER FOUND DEAD
- **LATE NOV 1991** – ADMINISTRATORS TAKE CONTROL OF MIRRORSOFT
- **JAN 31st 1991** – ACCLAIM PURCHASES IMAGE WORKS' CONSOLE TITLES FROM THE ADMINISTRATORS
- **JAN 31st 1991** – ALMOST ALL MIRRORSOFT EMPLOYEES ARE MADE REDUNDANT AND MIRRORSOFT IS SHUT DOWN

From that germ of an idea came the 3D cyberspace game *Interphase*. While being proud of the end result, Dean believes it wasn't as successful as they had hoped. "It got some good reviews but I think it was a bit too abstract and strange for most tastes. The unicycling frog probably didn't help!" he adds, laughing at one of the more obscure 3D objects included in the game.

Internal management changes at Mirrorsoft led to Jon Norledge taking the reins in the development department in 1990, soon followed by a flood of original titles from both new and highly respected developers in equal measure.

The biggest commercial hit for Image Works came in late 1990 when it released the home computer versions of *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles*, converted by Probe Software from the NES platform game, published by Konami via its Ultra label. The Sinclair Spectrum version alone sold a staggering 420,000 copies in just over a month at a time when 8-bit sales were in serious decline, becoming the top-selling game for Christmas that year.

Other titles from Image Works included futuristic 3D game *The Killing Cloud* from Vektor Grafix, split-screen platformer *Flip-It & Magnose* from Expanding Minds, Foursfield's isometric puzzler *Brat!*, and the unusual *Theme Park Mystery* from Brian Howarth and Teoman Irmak.

The Bitmap Brothers

After completing *Speedball* in late 1988, The Bitmap Brothers began working on an isometric adventure that was a change of pace from its usual arcade games.

"*Cadaver* was originally called *Anneka* because it was all about hunting for treasure," recalls project manager Simon Knight. "That was Eric [Matthews] trying to be clever!" he adds wryly, referring to the popular Channel 4 TV show *Treasure Hunt*, co-hosted by Anneka Rice and former BBC news presenter Kenneth Kendall. The name actually stuck until quite late on, when Image Works came up with the more intriguing title of *Cadaver*.

The Bitmaps wanted to produce a sequel to *Xenon*, so Eric Matthews conjured up a design with vertical scrolling, upgrade shops and multiple pick-ups. *Xenon 2: Megablast* was particularly innovative thanks to a tie-in with Bomb the Bass and their single, *Megablast*, which was included in the soundtrack. This collaboration would prove to be a turning point for the Bitmaps, leading to its own foray into game publishing just over a year later.

> **"It was clearly a great game, and we beat a number of publishers to the punch to sign it"**
>
> JOHN COOK REMEMBERS WHY IMAGE WORKS SIGNED SPEEDBALL

"Work on *Cadaver* went on for quite a long time," says Mike Montgomery, recalling the intricacies involved with writing the isometric arcade adventure. This meant that programming duties on *Xenon 2: Megablast* were handled by The Assembly Line and, in particular, Martin Day.

"We had met Martin as he was a friend of Adrian Stephens, who we were working with on *Interphase*," explains Simon Knight. "Martin had done some game programming, which we were all impressed with, so we put Martin together with Eric."

The end result was a slick, great-looking arcade blaster that did great business when it was released in 1989. The Bitmaps' reputation was now growing rapidly.

Speedball 2 followed the next year, but it needed a lot of last-minute attention. Image Works project managers and testers alike decamped to The Bitmap Brothers' offices in the final days of development to test the league system to breaking point. Despite all this effort, the working relationship between publisher and developer began to break down. With *Cadaver* finally completed, the Bitmaps started to wonder if the grass was greener elsewhere.

"When we had finished the two contracts, we were in talks with Mirrorsoft about doing some more, but they weren't our favourites so we were also going to other publishers," Mike explains. Some 20-plus years later, the reasons for the split are still not clear; differences of opinion and a clash of personalities is the likely explanation. Ultimately, The Bitmap Brothers formed its own publishing label called Renegade in 1991, which went on to experience great success over the next three or four years thanks partly to new Bitmap games like *Gods*, *Magic Pockets* and two *Chaos Engine* games.



» The Bitmap Brothers standing by Robert Maxwell's helicopter.

Alongside the Bitmap Brothers games, Renegade also published titles from other developers, with its titles distributed throughout Europe thanks to a deal with Mindscape International.

Movies and consoles

While the bulk of Image Works' games were original titles, it also decided to enter the big-money world of film licences. Through US contact Dick Lehrberg, Mirrorsoft signed a number of big Hollywood films including *Back To The Future Part II* and *III*, *Alien 3* and *Predator 2* for home computers and consoles.

Developing and publishing 16-bit console games throughout Europe was becoming a very lucrative business. Sega's presence ▶

CUTTING EDGE



Designed by future Rebellion founder Jason Kingsley, *Blade Warrior* was a visually interesting arcade adventure, utilising a graphical technique not seen before in a game, as Jason reveals: "It started with an original illustration I did on my computer of a high fantasy world, all in silhouette, using misty background tones and showing a knight standing there with a big sword."

Jason wanted to fill the screen with movement, but home computers weren't powerful enough to realise his vision. "My idea was to borrow from ancient shadow puppet theatre and let the player's imagination fill in the details. I also wanted parallax scrolling and depth of field grey tones for the landscape to create a spooky atmosphere."

Originally developed and promoted under the name *Paladin: Lord Of The Dancing Blades*, Image Works wisely asked if Jason could come up with an alternative name. Released in 1991, *Blade Warrior* was available for the IBM PC, Commodore Amiga and Atari ST. As an epitaph, anyone who has played the recent *Limbo* might want to take a glance at screenshots for *Blade Warrior* to see who came up with this striking look for a game first!



» The art from Pete Lyons on these pages is all that remains of *Drop Soldier*.

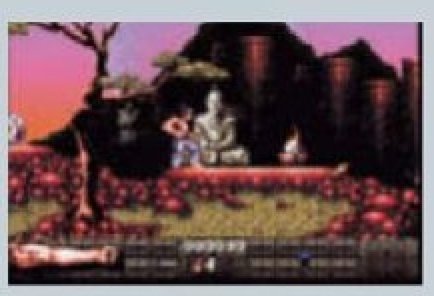
SIX OF THE BEST



Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe
Better gameplay, better graphics, better sound effects, better samples and better music. The sequel to *Speedball* was just better all round and, as the name suggests, extremely brutal. Anyone for ice cream?



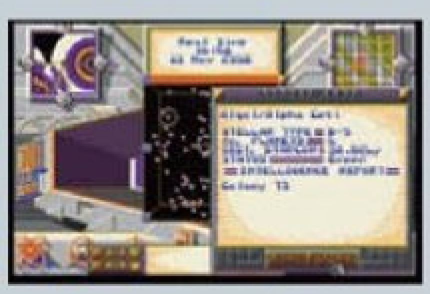
The Killing Cloud
This futuristic 3D police story from Vektor Grafix had an ingenious plot that helped to keep the frame rate acceptable by hiding the city in the eponymous cloud, thus keeping the visible objects to a minimum. Good stuff, even though it didn't sell many.



First Samurai
Mev Dinc's wonderful exploration-based beat-'em-up looked great, even on the Atari ST thanks to some clever tricks with the palette, and was nice and fluid to play. It even spawned a sequel; bet you can't guess what it was called!



Bloodwych
Much more than just a *Dungeon Master* wannabe. It had a split-screen two-player mode and was available on the Spectrum, C64 and Amstrad CPC as well as ST, Amiga and PC. The 16-bit graphics were iffy, but the overall package was good.



Gravity
Ross Goodley's sci-fi strategy arcade game suffered from a confusing interface, slow disk access and a poor manual. However, get past that and the epic themes and real science foundations made you appreciate it as a neat strategy game.



Mega Lo Mania
Sensible's slant on the god game featured tiny but well-animated little men who would come back in later Sensible Software titles, albeit dressed differently. Colourful graphics and a relatively easy user interface made the game a hit.

THREE TO AVOID



Robozone
A collaboration between Image Works, Arc Developments, and TV and film company Image Animation. The failure of the TV series proposal and the realisation that the design needed simplifying resulted in an uninspiring arcade game with little to redeem it other than the graphics.



Back To The Future Part II
The opening hoverboard level was barely passable, the sliding-puzzle level felt like an afterthought, and the whole package just failed to deliver. Poor though it was, it was probably still better than the game that Electric Dreams conjured up for the first movie, but that's not saying much.



Omnicron Conspiracy
Sierra was king of the graphic adventure realm back in 1990, although Lucasfilm Games was on the verge of stealing its crown and running off with it. Sadly, Image Works decided to license and convert this very average effort from Epyx Software. It was basic in appearance and dull in plot.

in Europe was only just starting to gather momentum, and Image Works had a number of games that were ideal for that platform. Arena Entertainment was formed specifically for publishing console titles developed by Mirrorsoft, and it bagged the console rights for various coin-ops, including *Terminator 2*, Bally Midway's *Arch Rivals*, and Williams' *Smash TV*. Alongside those titles, other games earmarked for conversion to Sega consoles included *Xenon 2*, *Speedball 2*, *Battlemaster* and *The Simpsons: Bart vs The Space Mutants*.

Remembering 5 November

Despite the successes and the potential of the games in development, nothing prepared Mirrorsoft for the events on and after 5 November 1991 when the owner of the Mirror Group, Robert Maxwell, went missing from his private yacht, to be found dead off the coast of the Canary Islands. MD Peter Bilotta still remembers that day and what happened afterwards very clearly.

"On the day he died, I had negotiated a refinancing package with the Mirror Group to put a lot more money into the business," he reveals. "They were very pleased with our performance and we planned to expand Arena Entertainment in the USA, which was being run for me by Geoff Mulligan. We were also going to move to newer offices in a better part of town and we had financing to expand our Sega and movie licence businesses. So I was pleased as punch coming back from lunch before hearing the news an hour or so later."

It quickly transpired that not all of the Maxwell-owned companies were doing as well as Mirrorsoft, and administrators were immediately appointed to investigate and sell off what they could.

"We were cash-rich and profitable, and we had significant pre-orders for the *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles* coin-op conversion and other big titles as part of our Christmas line-up," says Peter. "The administrators turned up within 24 hours, but for various legal reasons we were able to successfully chuck them out!" Unfortunately, this merely caused a delay of a week or so, before the inevitable happened and the administrators wrestled control away from the senior managers.

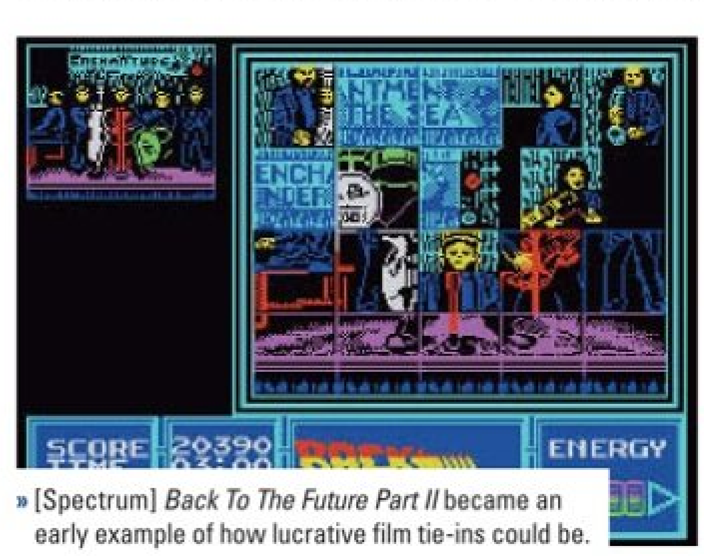
"At that point I realised that they weren't going to go away," admits Peter. "We went out very quickly to try and raise our own funds for a management buyout and had strong financial backing from investment banks and letters of support from distributors, customers and a letter of financial support from Sega, because we had lots of orders with customers and this affected all of them as well as us."

Unfortunately, the financial backers for the MBO couldn't get the required funding until 15 January 1992, which was too late for the administrators.

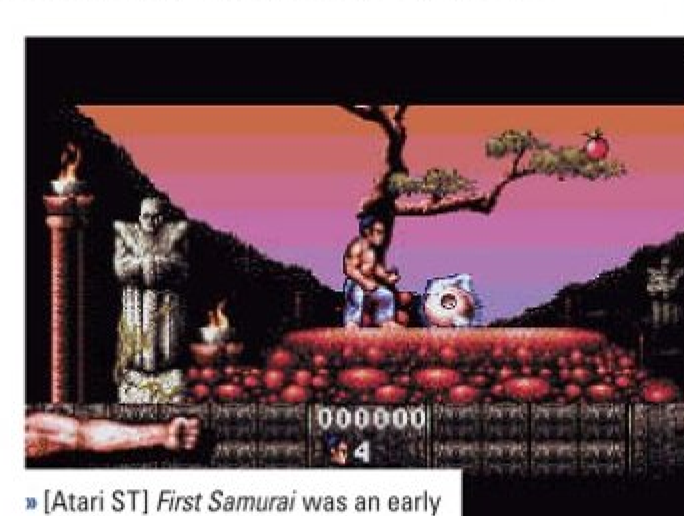
"Because of the number of intellectual properties and contracts that were involved, Arthur Andersen wanted the company sold by 31 December," reveals Peter. "Looking back now, I suppose I was too naive to fight it when I should have fought much harder.

"My aim was to try and keep the businesses afloat as best I could"

PETER BILOTTA ON CONVINCING ACCLAIM TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE ADMINISTRATORS

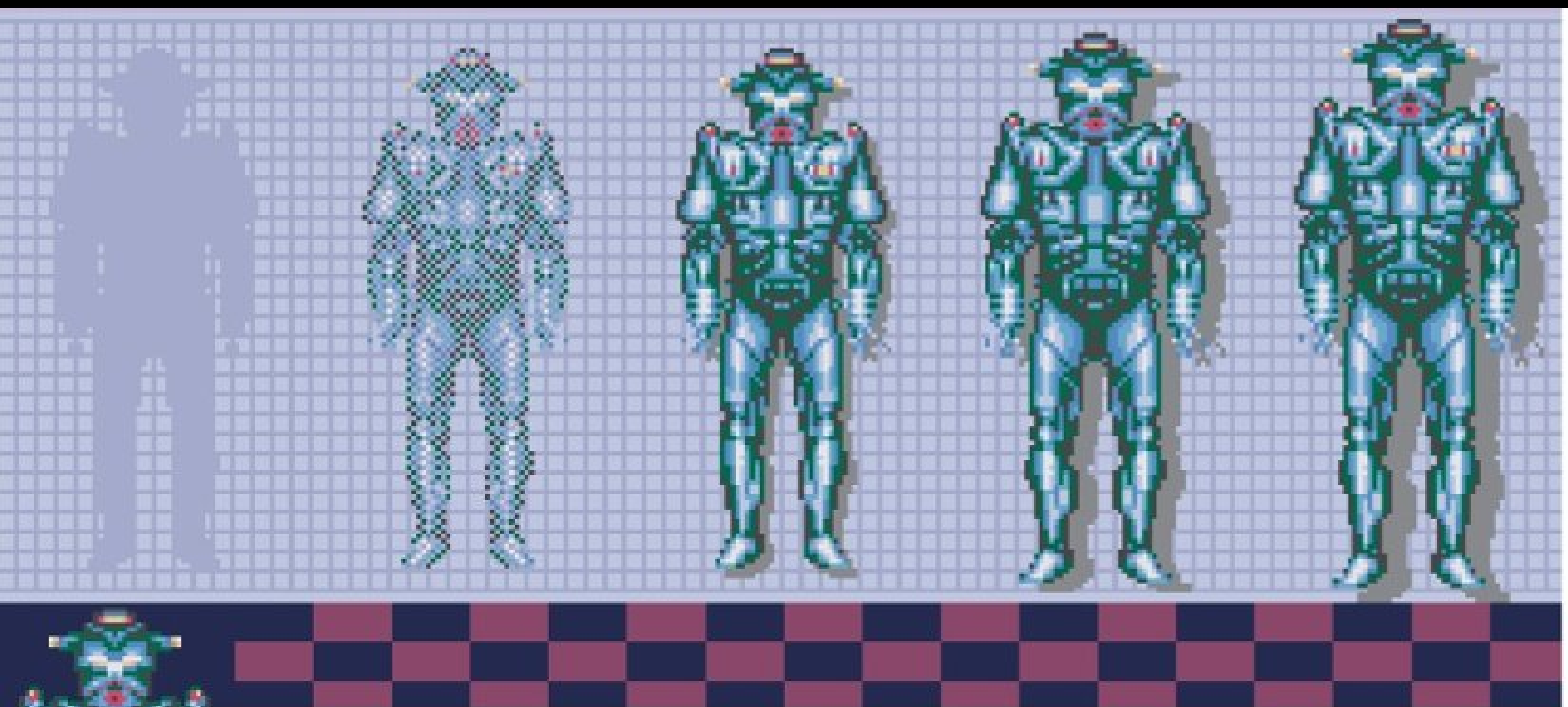


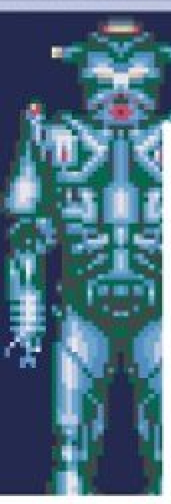
» [Spectrum] *Back To The Future Part II* became an early example of how lucrative film tie-ins could be.

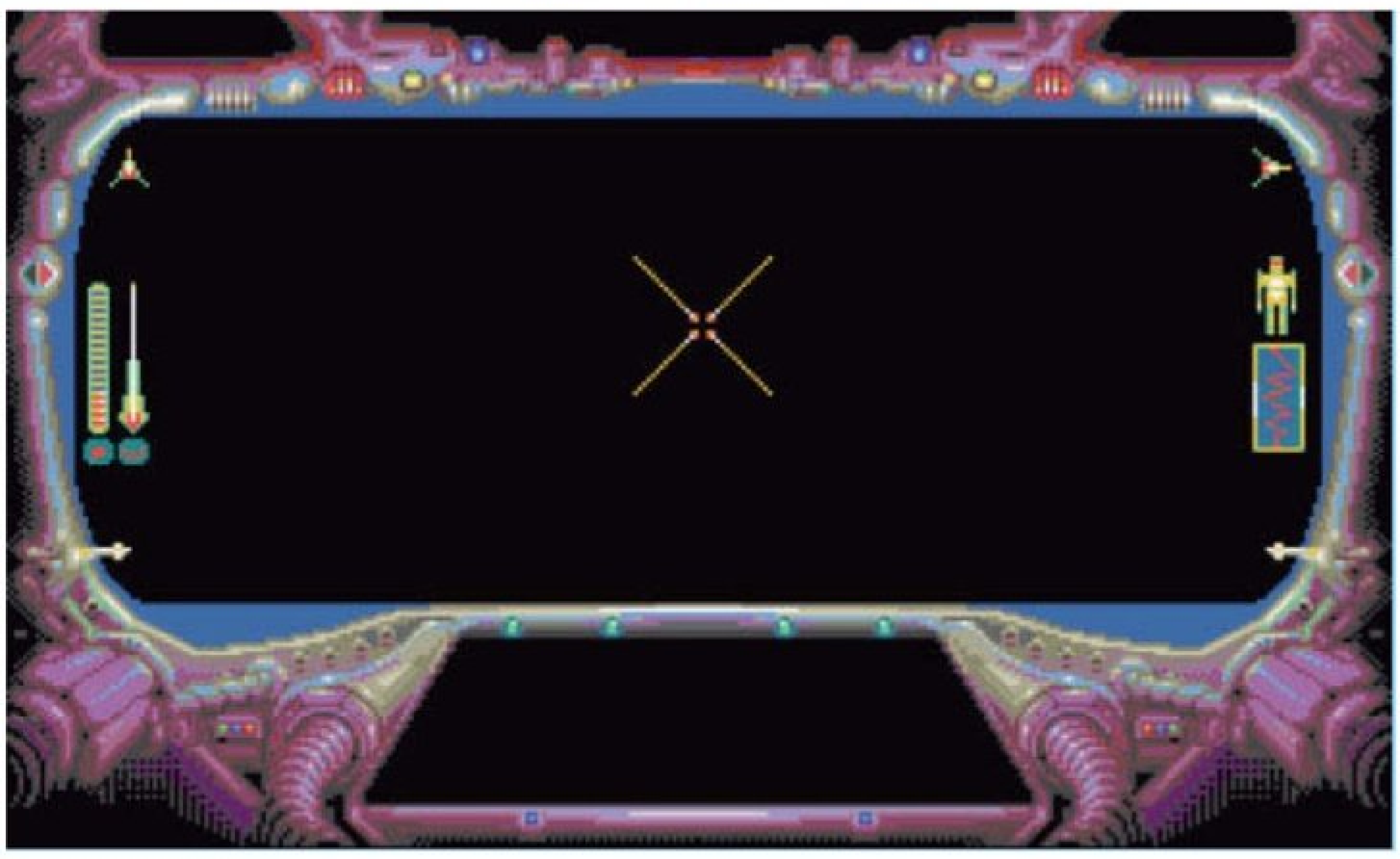


» [Atari ST] *First Samurai* was an early 16-bit project for Raffaele Cecco.









They were rushing things when there was no reason to."

With the MBO doomed to failure, Peter talked to associates at Acclaim and persuaded them to contact the administrators. "My aim was to try and keep the businesses afloat as best I could," he recalls. Acclaim was very interested, and Greg Fischbach flew over from New York and closed the deal with the administrators on 31 December, but not without a lot of last-minute haggling.

In the end, Acclaim bought up most of the Arena Entertainment console titles in development for about £150,000, which was an absolute bargain, as Peter explains: "Over the following two years, Acclaim made around a £15 million profit on the deal. They had originally given us the Sega rights to develop and publish various titles in Europe, because at that time they didn't have a licence with Sega for Europe and we did, so that deal immediately got them into the Sega business over here."

As with any business going into administration, there was a personal cost for those at Mirrorsoft. At the same time as they were negotiating with Acclaim, the administrators made the majority of Mirrorsoft employees redundant as they turned up for work on New Year's Eve 1991. Those who weren't in the office received the news in the post.

"I managed to persuade Acclaim to take on nine people from Mirrorsoft, but within a year to 18 months most of those had left," Peter adds.

New publishers

With the majority of console titles going to Acclaim, the rights to the other games in development defaulted back to the developers. Various projects originally destined for publication on the Image Works label therefore ended up at other publishers. Ubisoft took on the already released *Mega Lo Mania* and *First Samurai*, and Renegade signed *Sensible Soccer* and Graftgold's *Fire & Ice*.

The biggest benefactor was Virgin Games, which was just going through a reorganisation. Not only did it sign up a large number of titles for both home computers and consoles, but it employed a number of ex-Mirrorsoft people as well.



» Cathy Campos, Richard Hewison, Alison Beasley and Darren Anderson.



» *Gravity* author Ross Goodley.

GAMES WITH GRAVITAS

"I'd seen the display in *Populous* and I wanted to use a similar method to simulate the rubber sheet model of gravity," explains *Gravity* creator Ross Goodley. "Add to that a desire to create a big sandbox strategy game and that was my inspiration."

With graphics from Pete Lyon, who could produce wonders using a 16- or 32-colour palette, *Gravity* was a fascinating and hugely underrated game based on contemporary science. Sadly, it proved too hard for most gamers and was given away on a magazine cover disk little over a year later.

The games included *Apocalypse*, *Lure Of The Temptress*, *Alien 3* and *Cannon Fodder*, along with some of The Bitmap Brothers' Sega conversions.

A small number of games failed to find a new publisher and disappeared completely. Among these were the 3D game *Duster*, developed by Realtime Games and handed over to flight simulator specialist Rowan Software to complete; Ross Goodley's *Drop Soldier*; *Suzerain* by Foursfield; and the mysterious *Tunnels Of Doom*, which nobody can remember much about at all.

Reflections

The premature end of Mirrorsoft stopped Image Works in its tracks. Just looking at the titles that were in development gives an indication of how big the label could have become in the early Nineties. *Sensible Soccer*, *Cannon Fodder*, *Lure Of The Temptress* and all the Sega console games went on to be massive hits for other publishers. Coupled with the expansion plans, the future was looking very rosy before Robert Maxwell's death.

"Looking back on it now, I realise we were a very good team," says Cathy Campos. "Press trips to Amsterdam and Nice were great fun too. Browsing our back catalogue, I'd forgotten how prolific our release schedule actually was!"

"I had a fantastic time and worked on some amazing products with some great people, many of whom are still friends and colleagues," adds John Cook.

A SENSIBLE MOVE



Sensible Software produced its humorous god game, *Mega Lo Mania*, for Image Works. It was played on an alien planet with islands of varying sizes, ready to be conquered, and featured vibrant, small but well-formed graphics and some entertaining sampled voice talent.

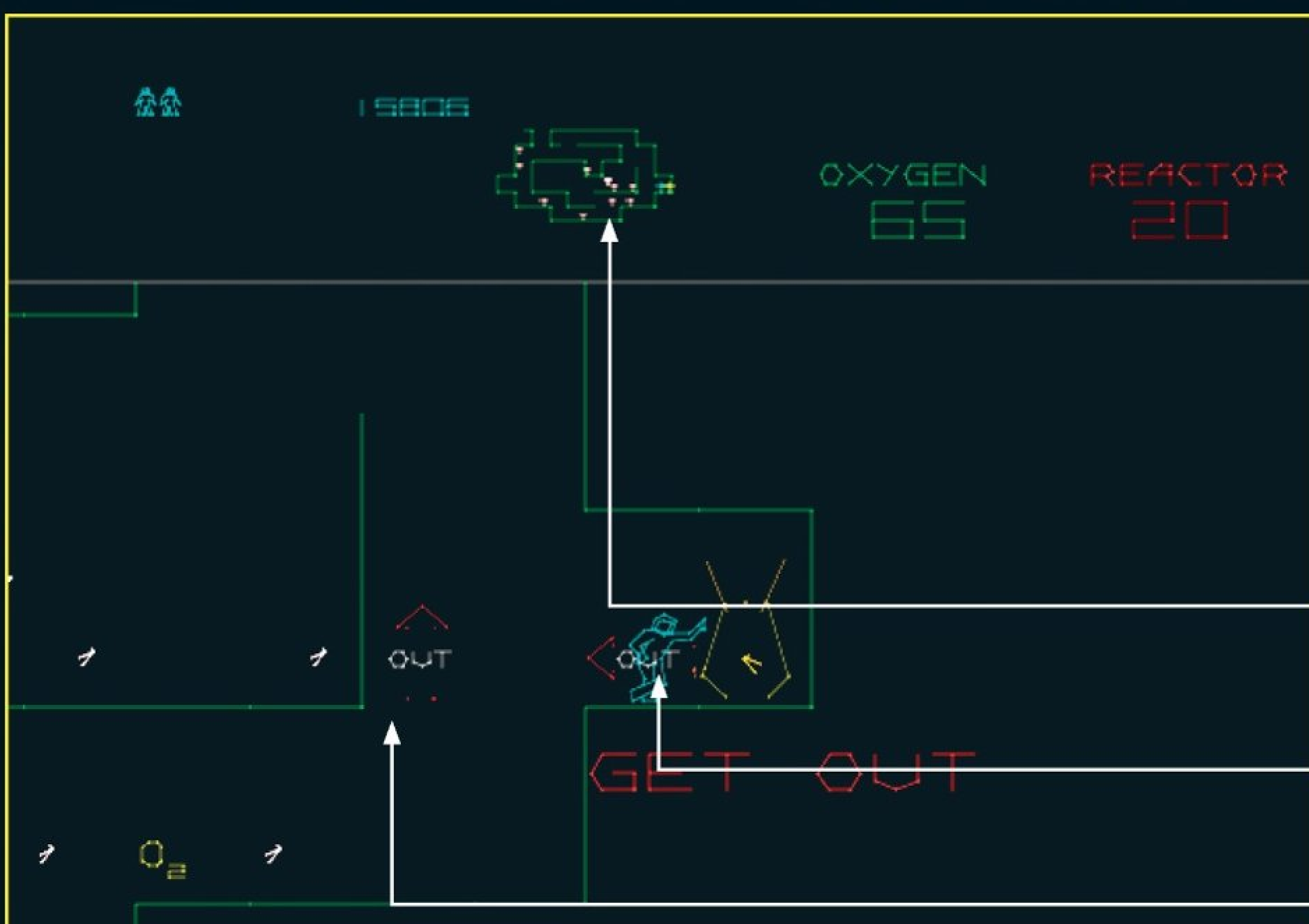
"*Mega Lo Mania* was the longest and most complicated game Sensible ever made," admits Jon Hare. "It went through many changes, beginning as a space race game set in about 2050 AD. We only changed it to starting with cavemen after we first saw *Populous*."

Shortly before the release of *Mega Lo Mania*, Mirrorsoft signed a host of other Sensible Software titles, including *Sensible Soccer*, *Cannon Fodder* and *Mega Lo Mania 2*. All of them went to other publishers after Mirrorsoft's demise, with the exception of *Mega Lo Mania*'s sequel, which was going to be in 3D.

"Dave Korn was working on it, but we realised we'd bitten off more than we could chew and so quietly dropped it!" reveals Jon.

THE UNCONVERTED

Arcade games that never made it home





IN DEPTH

» The gameplay of *Major Havoc* is divided into three different sections: a shooter part, a landing bit and a side-scrolling platformer stage.

» The controls were fairly original. You steer Havoc and the Catastrofighter using a vertical trackball (allowing only x-axis movement).

» Between stages, you get to play a *Breakout*-style minigame that enables you to win extra lives and even warp to later levels.

MAJOR HAVOC

■ **Developer:** Atari ■ **Year:** 1983 ■ **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up

■ **Designed and programmed by Owen Rubin, with contributions from Mark Cerny, *Major Havoc* is an epic multipart space mission presented in striking vector visuals.**

A courageous leader and skilled pilot, hero Havoc has been cloned by scientists, and he and his posse of doppelgängers have to stamp out the last of a nefarious robot race that has enslaved mankind. The mission is split into three sections. The first takes the form of a vertical shooter that sees you having to take down a phalanx of enemy ships from inside Havoc's ship, the worryingly named Catastrofighter.

The next part involves you having to carefully dock the ship on the enemy base. And the final section takes place inside enemy ships, and sees the Havoc using his shield and agility to traverse their maze-like insides, avoiding enemy drones, lasers and gun turrets to reach the ship's reactor and set it to self destruct.

With his objective complete, Havoc must then dash back to his ship before the enemy ship blows up. It's pretty rousing stuff, and having the action divided into multiple sections ensures it never gets dull and also holds wider appeal.

One of the best aspects of *Major Havoc* is its impressive presentation. For a hero made up of black space and simple lines, Havoc conveyed an impressive amount of character thanks to Rubin giving him some humorous animations – impatiently tapping his feet or taking a rest on the reactor if left passive for too long.

Major Havoc is one of the most entertaining vector arcade games ever created, so it's amazing that it never received a home conversion. The cause of this most likely lies in the fact that it apparently didn't do huge numbers on its release. Released in 1983, only a few hundred units were ever shipped by Atari, and the reason for this is said to be because at the time arcade operators were starting to tire of the inconvenience and cost of vector machine's breaking down.

If you do want to experience this vector gem, though, it was later included in *Atari Anthology* for the Xbox, PS2 and PC, and was also released on Microsoft's Game Room service.



CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

WIZARD OF WOR 1981

It's a tricky one because *Major Havoc* is truly one of a kind. It's a tenuous link but we're recommending Midway's superb dungeon-based two-player action title *Wizard Of Wor*, purely for its tense gameplay and maze-style playing field.

RIOT

■ **Developer:** NMK ■ **Year:** 1992 ■ **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up



» [Arcade] Yes that is RoboCop impaled on a spike. Yep, *Riot* seems to relish in being weird.

■ ***Riot* can be** seen as the insane, hyperactive, bastard child of *Contra* and *Cabal*. This on-rails shooter sees two Bill and Lance copycats trying to thwart an army that relies on special weapons and sorcery to do its evil bidding. With gameplay more *Cabal* than *Contra*, players are basically in the middle of a danger sandwich, surrounded by enemies occupying the foreground and background.

Thankfully the controls are kept nice and simple – one button to fire in one direction, a second for the other – and the sidelong road to victory is paved with plenty of things that can be used for cover. With the action taking place inside places such as a department store and an amusement park, and bosses that include an evil Yoda and a giant gorilla in a leather waistcoat, *Riot* definitely has its tongue firmly in its cheek, and at times almost feels like a parody of the shooter genre. It also has a strange obsession with seeing its two heroes fall through the air, and opens with the most nonsensical arcade attract screens we've even seen. It shows Player One's soldier blowing up a helicopter with machine gun fire. That's it. No explanation, just that bizarre scene.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

NAM-1975 1990



Riot shares common ground with SNK's *NAM-1975*, given its scrolling levels, insane bosses and two-player action (with the heroes here called Silver and Brown). It was released in arcades as well as Neo Geo and Neo Geo CD.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

NINJA COMMANDO 1992



This top down fighter/shooter from Alpha Denshi is basically *Darkmist* with ninjas… three of them, to be exact. It too features a varied assortment of weapons, a smattering of bosses and was released for the Neo Geo CD.

THE LOST CASTLE IN DARKMIST

■ **Developer:** Taito ■ **Year:** 1986 ■ **Genre:** Scrolling fighter



» [Arcade] There's not much to *Darkmist*; it's a simple hack and shoot affair. It's better than *Mad Crasher* though.

■ **This forced vertical** scrolling fighter sees you assume the role of a lone knight on a mission (we assume in analysis of the title, as there is no in-game story explaining his actions) to find a castle that's been misplaced in a place called Darkmist. As the camera scrolls up hordes of monsters and magical creatures march down, poised to attack our gallant knight and stop him in his quest. This is broken up by a large helping of boss fights. Our knight can slay his enemies using his sword, or with a projectile attack. And by nipping quickly into shops, visiting villages, and speedily smashing open treasure chests dropped by dead enemies (as the camera doesn't wait), he can also pick new swords to increase his attack power and alternative spell attacks, none of which are particularly satisfying to wield. With bland level design – there was one instance where the camera sat still for a minute and we had to find our way out of a dungeon maze – *Darkmist* is a forgettable attempt at fusing the RPG and scrolling fighter genres together.

BEST LEFT IN THE ARCADE

MAD CRASHER

■ **Developer:** SNK ■ **Year:** 1984 ■ **Genre:** Shooter

■ **This isometric racing** shooter features a furious death race in what looks a little like a super-charged Sinclair C5. The gameplay is pretty straightforward. Simply survive for as long as you can on a treacherous bit of floating track in a mundane-looking environment. You have to share the road with rival cars and as the slightest prang will cause your car to explode into a ball of nothing; you must therefore evade or blast away these vehicles with your front-mounted guns to stay alive. As well as deadly motorists, you must also look out for breaks in the track, which you can clear with a well-timed jump, and also make sure to run over speed boosts that allow you to shunt the other cars without the fear of dying instantly. Lacking any real sense of speed and excitement, and disappointingly bland visuals, this is an unremarkable title in the SNK stable that we're not surprised was never allowed to frolic free on home systems.



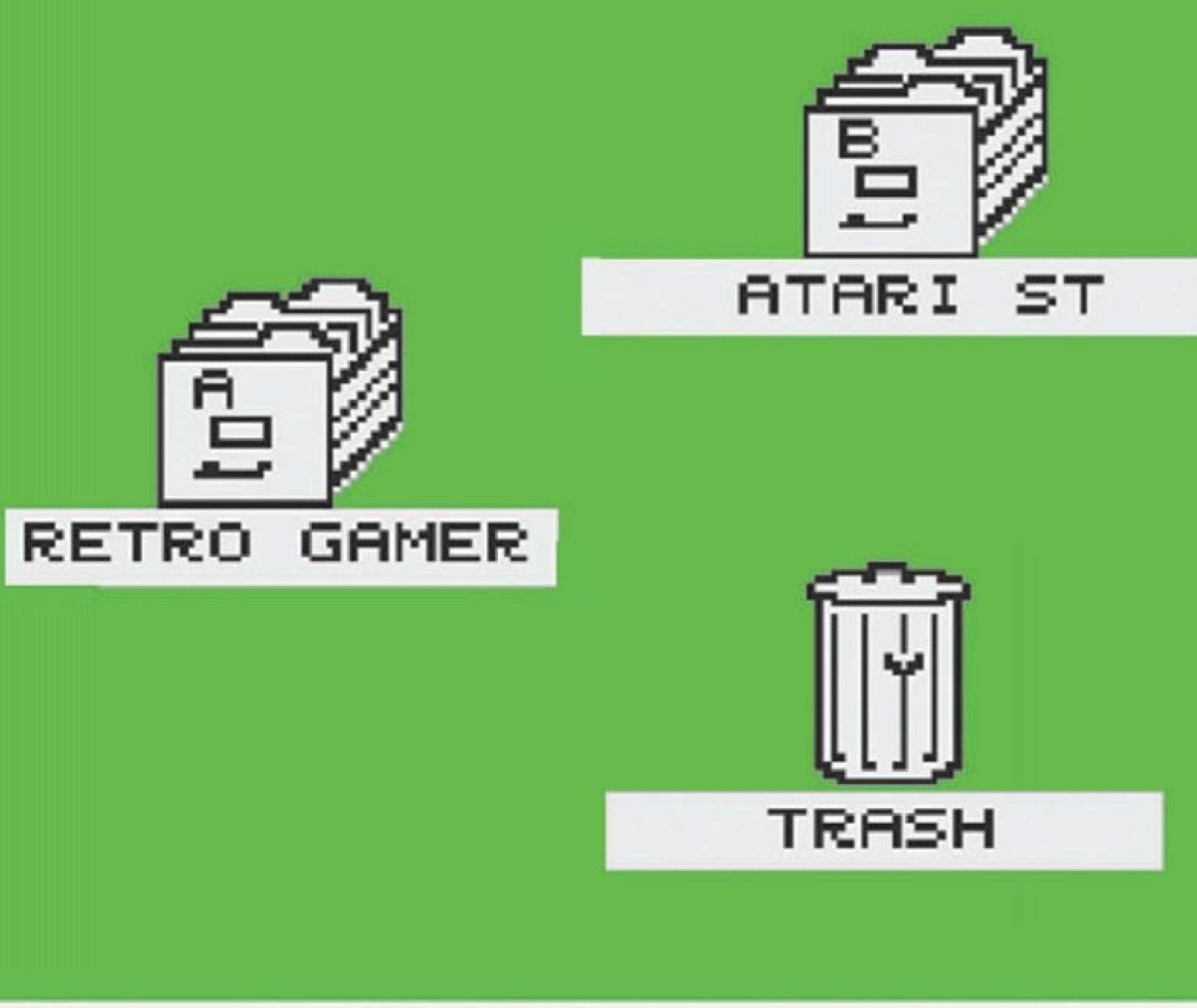
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THE NEVER ENDING STORY

HOW THE ATARI ST IS MORE THAN JUST THE AMIGA'S LONG-FORGOTTEN RIVAL

Despite its massive success, the Atari ST now seems to have become no more than a footnote in videogame history, always ignored in favour of its more illustrious rival – the Commodore Amiga. It's high time we set that straight. Just as many of us reminisce nostalgically about our days with the ST, we hope a few readers of RG will also start to see this wonderful computer in a whole new light…



The Atari ST began life as a computer codenamed the RBP, for Rock Bottom Price, and was the brainchild of then newly axed Commodore boss Jack Tramiel, who sadly died earlier this year at the age of 83. The year was 1984 and Jack had just formed a new company called Tramel Technology – spelt this way as it's actually the correct way to pronounce his surname – along with his sons and several ex-Commodore employees.

Their objective was to create an affordable 16-bit computer to bring the next generation of micros to the largest audience possible. Jack was also very aware of the growing computer industry in Japan and was keen to stop the Japanese advance into the US market in its tracks. Soon after, though, Jack found out that Warner Bros was looking to offload its debt-ridden Atari consumer division, responsible for home computers, consoles and videogames but not coin-ops. He soon secured the funding needed to buy Atari, and the Atari ST was born.

Based around the Motorola 68000 CPU, the Atari ST was originally intended to feature 128K or 256K of RAM as standard,





but this was changed just before its full release to 512K, as it otherwise left very little spare memory when the OS was running. Interestingly, the ST was going to have an early version of Windows as its operating system, which is ironic when it was the success of Microsoft's OS in PCs that helped kill the ST and win the home computer war. Because Windows wasn't ready in time, it shipped instead with another new GUI-based OS, GEM (Graphical Environment Manager) by Digital Research.

It was the very first home computer to feature integrated MIDI support that gave the machine great inroads into the growing electronic music scene. With its three resolution modes, including a monochrome 600x400 flicker-free high-res mode, it also made the ST a serious contender in the CAD market, going up against the popular Apple Macintosh range. There are many rumours about where the ST name came from, including a suggestion that it was named after Jack's son, Sam Tramiel, but the truth is that it stands for 'Sixteen Thirty-two' – a reference to its Motorola 68000, which was 16-bit externally but 32-bit internally. In its early days the ST was also nicknamed the 'Jackintosh', a clever take on the name of the Apple machine that it was set to compete with.

STUNNING THE MARKET

The ST debuted in 1985 at the winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. Industry onlookers were stunned at the machine's quick development, and there were mixed reactions for its sleek all-in-one design. From its release, Atari positioned the ST as a serious computer aimed squarely at the business market, and as such it often came bundled with applications such as word processors, spreadsheets and database programs.

However, it wasn't long before people recognised the machine's potential as a competent games machine. With its large palette of 512 colours, three-channel Yamaha sound chip, and built-in joystick ports and disk drive, it represented a great value all-in-one setup for gaming. Michael Raasch, once of Rainbow Arts and Thalion, was one of the many people impressed with the specs of the ST. "Having full control over the hardware was a big strength of the machine. Especially with its flat memory model; excellent CPU

The mag factor

ST FORMAT

Future Publishing
August 1989 – Sept 1996
(86 Issues)



This magazine was launched in 1989 when its predecessor, the short-lived *ST & Amiga Format*, was split into two separate publications. Most of the staff went on to work at *ST Format*. The longest-running mag for the machine, it was also the most balanced, covering games and more serious software.

ATARI ST USER

Europress
April 1987 – Nov 1994
(91 Issues)



ST User was the magazine aimed at the more serious audience, with lots of technical features, reviews of business software and application-focused cover disks. It featured some excellent PD games on its cover disks over the years, and at the end of the publication's life it merged with *ST Action*.

ST ACTION

Gollner Publishing
April 1988 – Nov 1994
(79 Issues)



For the early part of its life, this was the only ST magazine dedicated solely to games. This changed with the arrival of *The One For ST Games* in May 1991. However, just under a year later *The One* was merged into *ST Action*, with little change to the magazine. The cover disks were often notable for their exclusive demos.

that was far superior to the x86 that PCs of the time used; indexed colour palette, easily extendable through different mods including a simple memory upgrade; and MIDI!"

This was strengthened further with the addition of an RF modulator so it could be used on a TV without the need for an expensive monitor. Atari added letters after the ST name to determine the system type. With the STFM, for instance, the F stood for built-in floppy disk and the M for modulator.

GAME STATION

Many of the early games produced for the ST didn't make much use of the extra hardware as programmers struggled to get to grips with the 68000, and many were just simple card games or arcade clones. "Coding was not that easy back then compared to nowadays. There was just machine code and no tools except for the ones you made for yourself," recalls Stefan Kimmlingen, who worked at Eclipse Software during the ST years.

This all changed with the release of *Dungeon Master* by FTL in 1987. The first game to really show what this new 16-bit technology could do, it was a vast RPG that was represented in 3D and revolutionised the genre. It sold 40,000 copies in its first year of release alone and went on to become the bestselling ST game of all time. It's been said that more than half of all ST owners actually bought a copy of this game, a truly outstanding figure that highlights both its market penetration and significance.

While this title was subsequently converted to a host of different platforms, it's on the good old Atari ST that *Dungeon Master* is best remembered. From this time onward, the ST began to garner an increasingly solid reputation as an adept games machine.

The programmer of the classic ST game *Starball*, David Oldcorn, remembers when



The ST's big rival, the Commodore Amiga A500.

Amiga Beaters

The classy Atari ST titles that Commodore's Amiga couldn't touch

CAPTAIN BLOOD >INFOGRAMES



Although *Captain Blood* was released for a number of different platforms, the Atari ST version was the first and thus all subsequent ones were derived from it. Being that it was designed for the ST, it made full use of the machine's features. The later Amiga version played slower, lacked some minor features and was also missing many of the alien sounds. Fans argue that the full set of alien languages are integral to playing the game as it was meant to be played.

OUTRUN >US GOLD



While both versions – and most of the other home computer ports, in fact – were pretty poor, the Amiga version is particularly bad. The version for Commodore's 16-bit computer came out around a year after the Atari one, and although it was common at this time to just port the ST code, this was a very poor effort indeed. It had an ugly yellow border, jerky graphics, out-of-tune music and possibly the worst sound effects you will ever hear in a videogame.

DEFENDER OF THE CROWN >CINEMAWARE



Ask anybody in the know about ST games that are superior to their Amiga counterparts and this game is mentioned time after time. Like many of the other games listed here, the ST version came out earlier and the later Amiga port had a number of differences. The most notable of these was that in the ST game the combat elements worked much better, especially the jousting, and saving the damsels in distress was a much easier task to perform.

FALCON >SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE



One area where the Atari ST is usually known to excel over the Commodore Amiga is in 3D performance. The ST featured a faster CPU, and the way it displayed graphics meant games utilising polygons often ran both faster and smoother on the Atari machine. *Falcon* is one of the most notable of these, and it's easy to spot the difference when both versions are played side by side.

TIME BANDIT >MICHTRON



Time Bandit is an iconic game among ST owners; it was one of the very first games released for the machine back in 1985 and became an instant favourite. Itself a conversion of the Dragon 32 and TRS-80 game, it was also ported to the Amiga three years later for the budget market. The version on Commodore's home computer was missing some of the graphics from the ST original and was criticised for its ill-suited sound effects too.



» Richard Karsmakers is a game designer and journalist who worked for Thalion Software and was also the brains behind *ST News* magazine. He wrote the background stories for near enough every Thalion game up to 1991.



» Stefan Kimmlingen worked as a graphics artist for Eclipse Software. His CV includes games such as *Stone Age, Monster Business, Bundesliga Manager*, and Iron Soldier and Iron Soldier 2 on the Atari Jaguar.



» Michael Raasch was once a games developer at prestigious companies like Rainbow Arts, Thalion and Eclipse Software, working on notable games such as *Dragonflight, To Be On Top and Gates Of Jambala.*

he got to grips with the machine: "I loved the ST. It was easy to learn and start knocking code out on, but the ultimate limit of what you could do with it was all down to your own smarts."

As people began to push the ST hardware further, they also began to learn that this powerful 16-bit beast still had limits, and this now became part of the challenge. "I think we all liked the fact that the machine had its limits. It was amazing to see that some guys really didn't care too much about that fact and just made really amazing games," Stefan adds.

Atari was quick to cash in on this new-found reputation with the release of the ST Action Pack bundle. This proved to be a big hit with consumers, due to its great value for money. Including up to 30 games and an Atari joystick, plus everything needed to connect it to your TV at home, the promotion was advertised heavily in the gaming press and helped persuade many of the remaining 8-bit hangers-on to trade up.

THE COMPETITION STORMS IN

Once Commodore's Amiga finally hit the market, designed by ex-Atari staff and originally funded by Atari under Warner Bros, it saw the two 16-bit juggernauts go head-to-head on a level playing field. Now the competition had arrived, the greatest playground rivalry since the Spectrum vs Commodore 64 ensued. As the home users became fiercely loyal to their respective brand, so did many of the professional coders too, each having their own favourite machine. "I loved the ST," enthuses Stefan. "Somehow it just felt like home working on it. I never got used to the Amiga, though it had more colours, better digital sound, and fewer limitations. But as I told you before, the limitations we had to deal with made every product a little more special."



In the early days, the ST had the upper hand, mainly thanks to its far cheaper price and great value Action Pack. This led to most of the games of this time being developed on the ST first and then converted over to the Amiga. This commonly resulted in very little difference between the two versions, which often gave the appearance of the machines being equals.

It was only once the price of RAM began to skyrocket, and the price of the ST rose to that of its rival, that the balance of power started to shift. Developers wanted to produce games aimed at the Amiga to cater for its rapidly enlarging market, and its superiority quickly became apparent. Atari's release of the STe line, where the 'e' stood for 'enhanced', did little to help, despite featuring more colours, a blitter co-processor, and better sound. The first fault with the STe was that it had compatibility problems with a number of popular games, and it was also strangely sold alongside the cheaper STFM variant for a while, confusing many consumers.

We spoke to several coders, all of whom had very different views on the STe. While Richard Karsmakers of Thalion Software thought the STe was "too little, too late" and "not powerful enough to compete with the Amiga", Stefan told us: "The STe was not too late. At the time it came out the Amiga had its own fan base, and the ST did too. It was a good little update; we all had an STe where I was."

The most in-depth opinion, however, came from David Oldcorn: "Too little, no. Too late, certainly. Indeed, one of the problems was that there was no possible upgrade path to STe hardware that didn't involve buying a new machine. If Atari could have shipped it in 1987, with a few simple fixes such as writable screen current and low-byte VAP, and made them available to everyone with just an MMU change, then it might have had more traction."

These many problems meant that very little software was actually released that took advantage of the extra hardware, leaving the Amiga to dominate, and eventually win, the 16-bit war.

THE START OF SOMETHING SPECIAL

What have stuck with many people from the ST years are the working relationships and friendships that arose and continue to flourish. The 16-bit years saw the solo bedroom coder replaced with teams of people to handle each aspect of game development. Graphic artists, musicians, testers and game designers joined up with programmers to create far more complex projects. This teamwork led to some groups of developers becoming more like families as they lived out of each other's pockets and stayed up all night to meet deadlines.

"We stayed in the Thalion HQ to work on *Dragonflight*," remembers Michael Raasch. "By staying, I mean sleeping bags on the floor, eating lots of pizza or Greek fast food and going to the local pool due to the lack of showers in the office! One morning Jochen Hippel woke up and said: 'I feel totally shite! I woke up at night and was so thirsty I grabbed the bottle next to my sleeping bag and had a big sip, only to figure out that it was my shampoo!'"

And he's not the only one with fond memories. "My best memory of the ST is





» The classic ST mouse that came bundled with the computer.



» [Atari ST] *Carrier Command* was a good example of the ST's power.



» [Atari ST] The were plenty of quirky games on the Atari ST, as *Weird Dreams* proved.


Max Hall's music studio with an ST at its heart.

definitely the people I have met! No doubt about that," adds Stefan. "I am very happy that I am still in touch with some of the most amazing guys you could imagine. The mighty Jochen Hippel was my best man at my wedding."

It also seems that alcohol may have played a big part, if David's story is anything to go by: "Just after finishing *Starball*, we started work on a beat-'em-up game for the Falcon, provisionally titled *Super Kick-Up*. We'd done some trial graphics and lovely high-colour sprite routines, and I'd worked out a very clever way of doing drop shadows that would neatly run onto certain types of architecture in the background and look very cool, but to make it efficient I needed to rearrange the graphics formats. I'd just started doing this on the day my mate graduated, and we had a pint or four at lunchtime. I came back in and started trying to fix this. After about an hour I realised I'd deleted loads of code I really needed, and turned the machine off and had a nap. Then I tried again, and an hour in, the code was so complicated I couldn't understand it any more. I turned the machine off again and bought a PC the following week. Don't program after a liquid lunch!"

ATARI ST

TRASH

> "It took years for the PC to even come close to ST in music-making"

Of course, we can't talk about teamwork and the ST without mentioning the vibrant demo scene. Ever since the ST arrived, people have been writing demos for it to see what they could make it do. From this grew groups of coders, commonly referred to as 'sceners', trying to outdo each other with more complex demos and, even more so, outdo the efforts of the rival Amiga groups. This demo scene is still going strong, with demo parties like Sundown, Silly Venture and Outline taking place each year all over Europe. Many of these demo coders are keeping the ST alive as a games machine today, with recent homebrew releases like *r0x*, *Catch Me If You Can* and *Fear*.

STOP OF THE POPS

During the early to mid-Eighties, pop music ruled the charts, from the New Romantics to the paint-by-numbers efforts of Stock, Aitken and Waterman. The arrival of affordable keyboards and synthesizers saw electronic flavours start to creep into the top 40. Pop took a back seat in the late Eighties, though, thanks largely to the Atari ST. Its affordable price and built-in MIDI ports allowed Atari's computer to take music out of the expensive, high-tech studios and into bedrooms all over the land.

This saw a revolution in the music charts as groups like Altern 8, The Prodigy, Orbital and Fatboy Slim appeared and began to dominate the top ten each week. ST programs like Notator, Quartet and especially Cubase allowed you to write your own tunes on the ST and play them back through your keyboard, synth or drum machine. Many people still use the ST or its successor, the Falcon, to make music today, thanks to its easy-to-use software and reliable hardware. It took many years for the PC to even come close to matching the ST when it came to music-making. The MIDI ports are perhaps the biggest legacy of the ST today.

THE LAST WORD?

With its sizeable user base, the ST lived on well into the Nineties and was still being sold when Atari's last machine, the Jaguar, came along in 1993. The ST also had a successor in the form of the Atari Falcon, a 32-bit computer that was backwards compatible with a host of ST software and originally designed to go head-to-head with the Amiga A12000. Sadly, it was a commercial failure as it went through a host of delays, was shipped in essentially the same case as the ST, and failed to appeal to key developers.

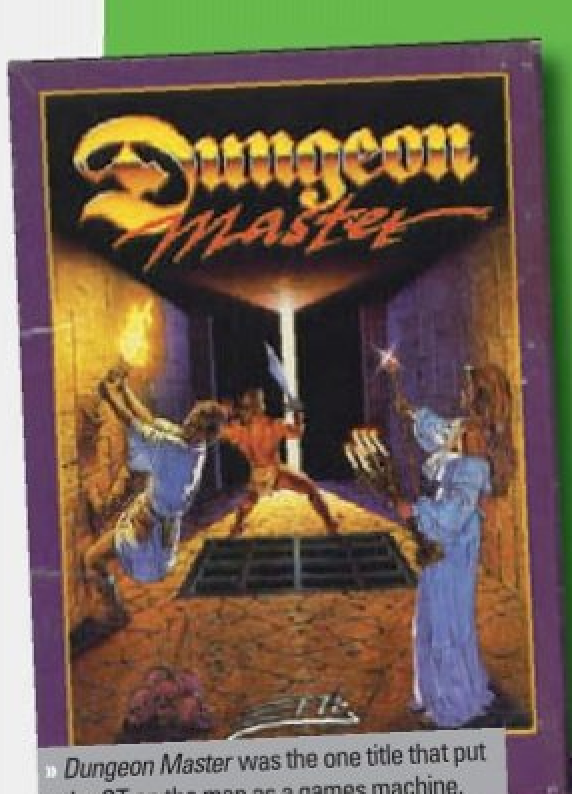
"The Falcon was quite a good idea but too late, too expensive, and hardware-wise it seemed to just have been hacked together," Michael Raasch recalls. "Norman Kowalewski (Atari Germany) once sent me a Falcon that I could test drive for a couple of days before it was for sale, but it was just not enough time to make something out of it. And, last of all, better marketing; they had lots of ads in magazines aimed for Atari ST owners. Uh, why?"

It did, however, gain a nice foothold in the music industry, where the ST was still largely dominant. The ST ended up being Atari's last real games computer as the shift to console gaming began.

Many believe that Atari should have continued to pursue that market like Commodore did, but David Oldcorn reckons Atari did the right thing. "I don't think anything it could do would have changed the trajectory of the market," he says. "In 1990 the Mega Drive and then the SNES would always have finished all the other games machines, and a year or two later the PC became competitive on price and killed the 'custom' business machines. The Amiga hardly lasted any longer than the ST, after all. All Atari could have done was to try to outdo the consoles, as they realised belatedly with the Lynx and Jaguar, but being a US company they never really had much of a chance at that either."

The Atari ST. It was a games machine, a music-maker, the heart of the office and a major part of many lives. The machine continues to live on through the demo and homebrew scene, and can still be found in the corner of many a studio. The history of home computers would definitely be a lot less rich without the ST making gaming's first steps into the 16-bit era.

Special thanks to the ST Demo Scene Group, Atarilegend.com, David Picken, Max Hall, Richard Karsmakers, Stefan Kimmlingen, Michael Raasch and David Oldcorn for help with creating this article.



Dungeon Master was the one title that put the ST on the map as a games machine.


ST four-player setup on *Gauntlet 2* at Jagfest UK in 2010.



Cover disks were very popular, and in the early years magazines like *The One* carried dual-format ST/Amiga disks.

10 ST Exclusives

The best games available for Atari's 16-bit home computer



ALIEN THING
< 1995 TOP BYTE SOFTWARE

Arriving very late in the ST's life, this game was clearly inspired very heavily by the Amiga game *Alien Breed*. A wonderful *Gauntlet*-like maze-based shooter with some lovely graphics and really top-notch digitised sound. This title also takes advantage of the extra hardware in the STe to great effect.



ROCK N ROLL CLAMS
< 1994 CASPIAN SOFTWARE

This is a brilliantly original and downright zany one or two-player platformer that also features enhancements for STe owners. You have to bounce your clam around each level, collecting the musical notes so you can take Casper Clam and his band from the bottom of the ocean to the top of the charts!

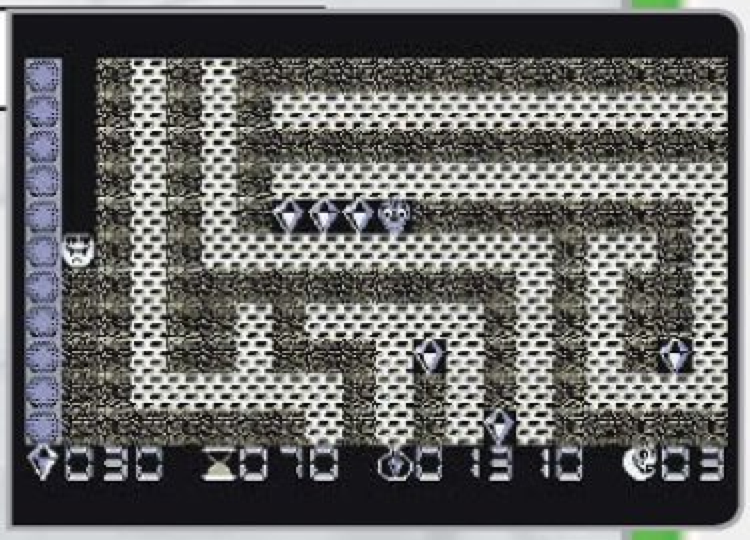
ANDES ATTACK
> 1988 LLAMASOFT

From the mad mind of Jeff Minter comes this superb *Defender* clone that itself is an update of a Commodore VIC-20 game, which was the very first title to be released under the Llamasoft label. Expect the usual array of crazy speech samples, impressive graphical effects and addictive gameplay.



SKULL DIGGERY
> 1987 NEXUS

Another clone of a popular game – *Boulder Dash* this time – and a massive favourite among ST owners. One of the reasons is that the game is played in either medium or high resolution, meaning you could have a cheeky play between knocking out your next chart-topping single on Cubase!





ASTEROIDS DELUXE
< 1987 ATARI

In the early days of the ST, Atari itself released a string of games for the machine. Of these, *Asteroids Deluxe* is one of the few exclusive titles. It's essentially an upgraded version of the superb arcade original, with colour graphics replacing the coin-op's vectors, new enemies and shields.



SUPER STARIO LAND
< 1995 TOP BYTE SOFTWARE

In case you haven't already worked it out, this is in every respect an unashamed rip-off of the *Super Mario Bros* games. That said, it's an incredibly good imitation that not just looks and sounds the part but also captures the tight gameplay that made Nintendo's classic platform series so popular.

CHOPPER-X
> 1987 MASTERTRONIC

We have always had a soft spot for this pretty generic vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up. Probably because it was among the first games one of us got with his ST when he first bought it. This game is particularly notable for having MIDI-compatible music, making it one of only a few games to do so.



SUBSTATION
> 1995 UNIQUE DEVELOPMENT

One of the things that helped the PC-compatibles kill off the ST and Amiga was the arrival of the first FPS games like *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Doom*. This 1995 title from a Swedish software house looked to try to redress that balance somewhat. This is an impressively moody attempt that even features MIDI port link-up.





PENGY
< 1987 RED RAT SOFTWARE

This game is clearly based on Sega's classic arcade game *Pengo* – even the name is similar! But that's no bad thing when the game is just as much fun to play. An early ST game, it features the almost overly bright and colourful graphics that seemed typical of that era as developers got to grips with the hardware's capabilities.



ZERO 5
< 1994 CASPIAN SOFTWARE

This STe/Falcon-only title features probably the best graphics you will see on this home computer. A 3D space shooter with super-smooth polygon graphics and digitised sound effects, it later received a similarly highly acclaimed sequel on the Atari Jaguar that strangely used the same name.

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come



INFO

- **» Featured System:** PlayStation 2
- **» Year Released:** 2001
- **» Publisher:** Sony
- **» Developer:** Naughty Dog
- **» Key People:** Andrew Gavin, Jason Rubin (designers), Mutato Muzika (composer)

GO DEEPER

- **» Beating the game with all 101 Power Cells unlocks a cut-scene of Daxter reverting back to his goofy human form.**
- **» In preparation for making *Jak And Daxter*, Naughty Dog had dev kits for months before any other developer outside of Japan, with the exception of EA.**



JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY

23.

Undoubtedly a tribute to the Nintendo 64 era of the 3D adventure platformer, Naughty Dog's Jak And Daxter is a fantastic example of a genre now missing in action

THE BACKGROUND

Following the close of the PlayStation era, the completion of *Crash Team Racing* and the sale of the *Crash Bandicoot* licence, the successful Sony-owned dev Naughty Dog set itself the goal of creating a new fictional world that was completely seamless on the incoming PS2 hardware. Naughty Dog asked its artists to envision what the world of their new game might look like – *Aladdin* would be counted as one of its stronger sources of inspiration. *Jak And Daxter* had high-end animation for an early PS2 title, part of the studio's drive to master the hardware in a way that no other developer had, which also entailed creating a whole range of in-house custom tools for the project.

Mario 64 was a huge influence on the staff, too. Instead of collecting a lot of random elements into one unruly world, creating a sense of continuity between environments and objectives was really important for Naughty Dog, and this is reflected in the way that there's a miniature story to every side-quest across the game. Some members of staff at Naughty Dog felt they had brought a title with elements normally associated with Nintendo to the PS2. Ultimately, *The Precursor Legacy* was a critical and commercial hit, spawning sequels that were solidly made, yet lacking the same spark in overall design.

THE GAME

At the time of release, members of the press often declared that *Jak And Daxter* was a mixture between *Crash Bandicoot* and one of a few Nintendo games – *Zelda* and *Mario 64* being the most prominent examples. That was high praise for *The Precursor Legacy*, which very much had the same accessible interface and lighter tone of a typical Nintendo title, adhering to the rule that the main character simply has to feel satisfying to play as you manoeuvre them through any given level. While *Crash* was a structured platform affair, *Jak And Daxter* encompassed a wide range of different environments and challenges, yet grounded it all in the same constant experience.

The ultimate objective in *Jak And Daxter* is to gather 101 Power Cells – read: stars – but the quests to attain all of them are exquisitely diverse, challenging the player to explore, race, fish, gas plants, destroy flying elephants, herd

Things of note







No Load Screens!

The cut-scenes are a bit talky, but *Jak And Daxter* uses them to hide loading screens completely in the game – a huge technical breakthrough at the time, and one that really enhanced the gameplay.

Jak And Daxter, MIA

Although the two heroes are going to crop up in Sony's *Smash Bros* equivalent in the near future, Naughty Dog decided not to pursue a new *Jak* game some time ago, putting the series on hiatus.

Silent hero

As per videogame tradition, Jak is a silent hero in the first game, with Daxter filling most of the silences with annoying quips. In the second instalment, Jak gets a voice, but it doesn't add anything to the story.

Jak HD

The *Jak Collection* released by Sony this year collects the first three games in the series together, and it's another fine tribute to a bygone collection of games – certainly the best way to play *Jak* today.

Abandoning Crash

Naughty Dog took a risk in leaving *Crash Bandicoot* behind, a series which sold over 20 million in under a decade. It has since done the same with *Jak*, choosing to leave it behind when starting with the PS3.



» [PS2] The whole world is seamlessly drawn together – it contains everything from an Atlantis-style city to a volcanic speedway.



» [PS2] Sentinel Beach requires a bit of lateral thinking to figure out how the solutions to its many puzzles.



» [PS2]Some of the Blue Eco challenges are a right ruddy headache to solve.

What the press thought

Play
Score: 9/10
"Jak And Daxter manages to offer something for everyone – if you're after a game that brings back fond memories of games gone by, you're in for a treat."

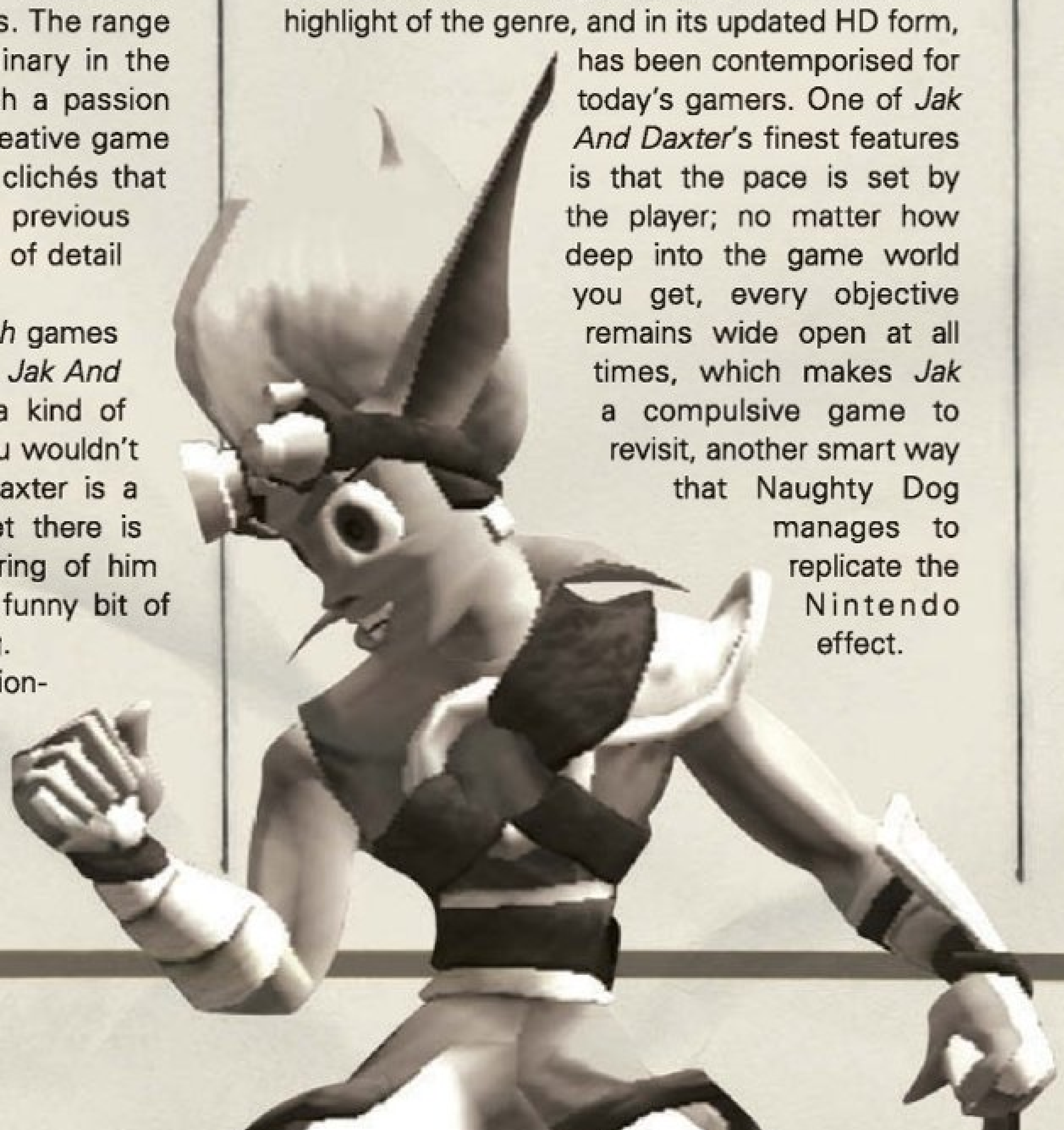


GamePro
Score: 9/10
"Its premise is straightforward, yet there's so much to do and see, along with some sizeable challenges that will test even the brightest adventure veterans."

creatures and loads more, justifying these bizarre scenarios with amusing cut-scenes featuring the world's many residents. The range of objectives was nothing extraordinary in the wake of *Mario 64*, but there's such a passion in the way they dovetail with the creative game world, which subverts a lot of the clichés that dogged 3D platformers during the previous two generations, due to the amount of detail invested in this backdrop.

Like Naughty Dog's range of *Crash* games on the PSone, the developer infused *Jak And Daxter* with its own identity, and a kind of irreverence in the cut-scenes that you wouldn't normally see in a Nintendo title. Daxter is a typically annoying sidekick, true, yet there is something endearing about the pairing of him with Jak, thanks to the occasional funny bit of dialogue and enthusiastic voice-acting.

Yet it's the artform of building an action-adventure world that is on display here – Naughty Dog deliberately set out to make something moreish, and they succeeded, filling every pocket of the world with Power Cells that demanded a combination of persistence, precision and a little logic. As a result, it's still a clear highlight of the genre, and in its updated HD form, has been contemporised for today's gamers. One of *Jak And Daxter*'s finest features is that the pace is set by the player; no matter how deep into the game world you get, every objective remains wide open at all times, which makes *Jak* a compulsive game to revisit, another smart way that Naughty Dog manages to replicate the Nintendo effect.



WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

In *The Precursor Legacy*, Naughty Dog created a high-end pastiche of different gameplay ideas, some of which it pioneered, and others that were obviously Nintendo-inspired. Far from a rehash, however, it's one of the strongest platformers ever made.

Today, when this type of game sadly no longer seems to have a place in the shooter-heavy industry, it remains exactly as distinctive as it did in 2001. *Jak II* would absorb a trendier open-world carjacking template, which would create a more monotonous rinse-and-repeat mission style, deviating from the mindset that made *Jak* the collision of different genre ideas that we love.

Jak's advantage is its anti-repetition; the world is built for the purpose of variety, whether the player bombs through it or pores over every detail. Naughty Dog is one of the strongest brands associated with PlayStation hardware, and *Jak And Daxter* cemented that reputation beyond the much safer *Crash Bandicoot* titles. That early ambition with the PS2 technology brought the very best out of the developer.

THE MAKING OF

TEMPEST

ATARI'S FIRST COLOUR VECTOR GAME WAS AN ADVENTUROUS, ABSTRACT SHOOTER THAT TOOK ARCADES BY STORM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EIGHTIES. TEMPEST CREATOR DAVE THEURER TAKES PAUL DRURY FOR A SPIN



» *Tempest* was known as *Vortex* during its development period, as Dave's prototype cabinet shows.

Would a game by any other name play as sweet? "The prototype *Tempest* machine was called *Vortex*," explains Dave Theurer, the man behind the seminal shooter, "but some players joked about how it sounded like a feminine hygiene product – Tampax! We decided it had to be changed…"

Thus Atari's colour vector debut was given a title that suggested a swirling maelstrom rather than period pains or, indeed, a toilet cleaner. *Tempest*, an utterly compelling blaster that threw players headlong into the action, was Dave's third game for the company. His coding career at Atari had begun in 1979 with the four-player version of *Atari Soccer*, and the following year he created his second trackball-based title, the mighty *Missile Command*. Where that game had tapped into the Cold War era's palpable fear of nuclear devastation, his next project also intended to play on something significant in the popular consciousness of the day: Taito's all-conquering *Space Invaders*.

"I loved that game," beams Dave. "When it first came out, we got a unit in our labs and I played it a lot. As soon as I'd wrapped things up on *Missile Command*, I wanted to take a shot at 'first-person' *Space Invaders*."

Management gave Dave the go-ahead for this re-imagining of the arcade industry's first global hit. Initially working with black-and-white vectors, before moving the project over to the new colour vector hardware, he produced a playable version, with rows of angry aliens plodding towards your ship. Successfully creating a convincing sense of 3D was of course encouraging, but Dave soon realised he had a bigger problem.

"It just wasn't much fun," he concedes. "Gene Lipkin, the head guy at Atari [coin-op] at the time, came into our lab for the first review, played it, and just said, 'ho-hum'. It was interesting to look at but I think the structure was a bit too loose. Having enemies come at you in 3D without enough reference points to accurately gauge where they were in the 3D space made it difficult to aim and to position your ship."

> "Blasting down the playing field at the end of a wave and then the cool feeling of lifting off the bottom of the platform into space is exhilarating"
>
> **Dave still looks out for spikes whenever he leaves a room…**

It was time for a major rethink, but rather than look to the arcades for inspiration, Dave turned to his subconscious. He recalled a strange, recurring dream from his childhood, involving monsters creeping up from a deep, dark pit in the ground. His supervisor, Steve Calfee, liked the idea and asked Dave to produce something they could play. With renewed vigour, he set to work turning the vague concept in his mind into a prototype game design that could take advantage of Atari's new technology.

"I was totally excited," he enthuses. "It was colour. It was 3D. It was fast. It was new! The colour vector hardware could do things on screen never done before."

Working in this brave new world was invigorating but not without its challenges. The technology was still being developed alongside Dave's monster shooter, and while the hardware never actually ignited, problems with the deflection amps could lead to frustrating monitor malfunctions… or worse. "Working with the prototype colour vector display was risky: if you parked the beam off the screen for too long, with too much intensity, it would burn a hole in the phosphor coating on the screen!"

Undeterred, Dave set about designing his cutting-edge project in a charmingly old-school fashion. "Everything – enemy objects, the player object, surfaces and so on – was drawn on square grid graph paper first, because there was no appropriate design tool at the time for this type of graphics," he explains. "There were lots of surface designs, enemies and player objects that we tried and rejected."

Those that made it through were indeed an odd, unearthly bunch. Multicoloured Fuseballs dancing skittishly inside the abyss, deadly Pulsars crackling with electricity, and the hordes of Flippers, which skipped like spiders across the web-like levels, created a surreal swarm



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

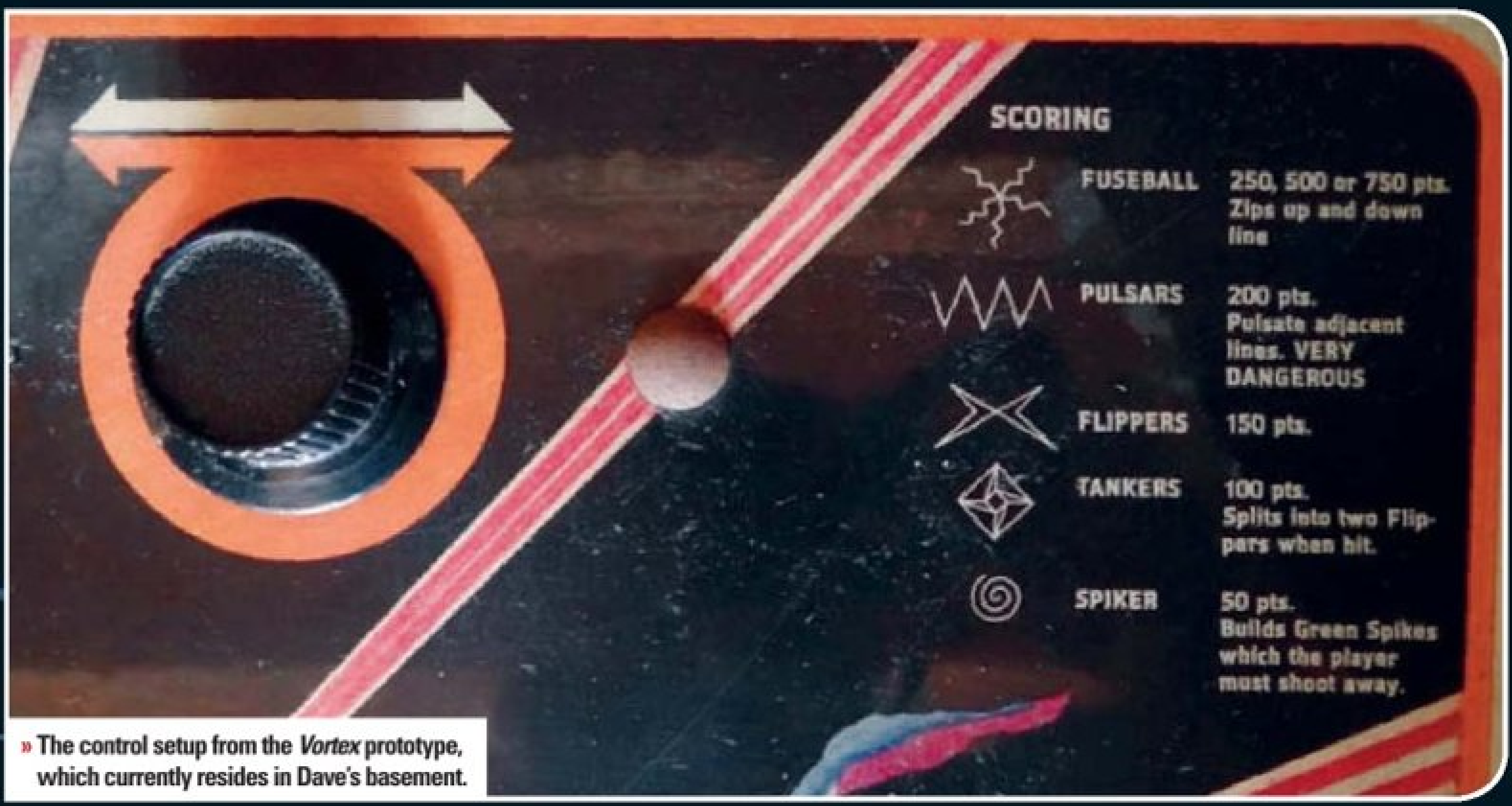
MISSILE COMMAND
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1980

I, ROBOT (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1983

APB
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1987







» The control setup from the *Vortex* prototype, which currently resides in Dave's basement.

THE MAKING OF

MCMLXXX

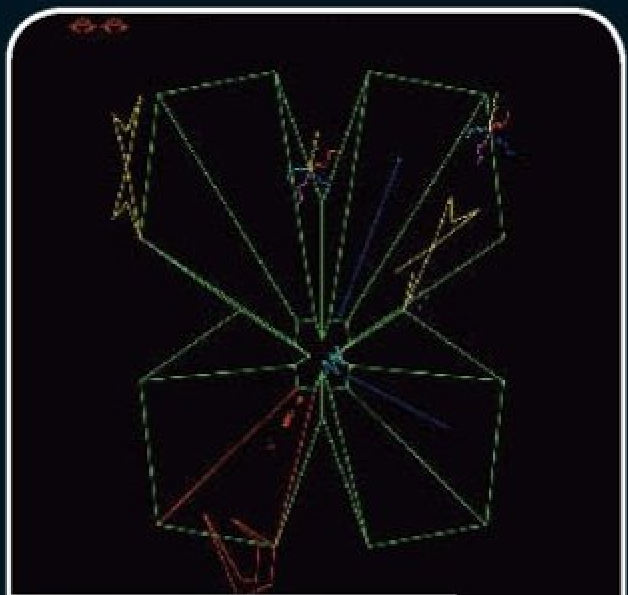
Eagle-eyed arcade gamers with a working knowledge of Roman numerals may notice that the copyright message on the title screen of *Tempest* says 1980, yet the game wasn't officially released until 1981. We asked Dave about this discrepancy but he couldn't enlighten us, so we turned to **RG**'s resident Atari expert, Marty Goldberg.

"You can't go by start screens, as most of the copyrights in those were put in during development as a protection before the copyright was actually filed for," he explains. "The copyright for *Tempest* was filed for on 30/9/81 and lists 5/81 as the 'publication' date, which means the date the materials being copyrighted were first exposed outside of Atari, most likely when initial field-testing started. The actual release date is October of '81, which is when they started promoting *Tempest*. It was the same with *Centipede* and *Asteroids Deluxe*; some of the early ROM revisions have the copyright dates the year before."

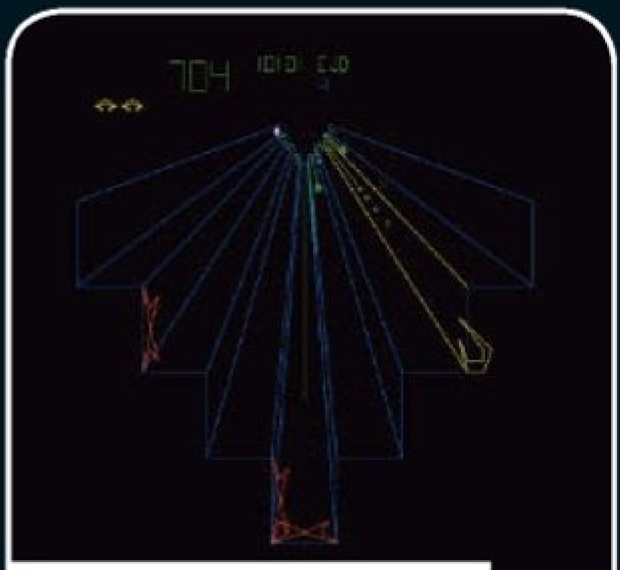
So now you know. Thanks, Marty!



» Dave in the early Eighties at a Rotberg house party. (Photo courtesy of Ed Rotberg.)



» [Arcade] *Tempest* has the ability to instil a singular kind of panic in players.



» [Arcade] The 'graduated V' layout of level 9 was always our favourite. "It's one of mine, too," adds Dave, reassuringly.

of adversaries. In fact, the way your blaster crawled along the outer edge of each of the 16 differently shaped holes from which these horrors emerged had a certain insect-like quality, which belied the game's abstract appearance.

"That was incidental," says Dave. "The goal with the player object was to create something that would change as you moved to show you exactly how you were moving, when you'd transition to the next position, and where, exactly, you were in relation to the grid. It needed a body and legs, and it all came together after many, many attempts."

The game was indeed coming together. By ensuring the enemies were 'stuck' to the surface of each hole and the player ship was restricted to movement along a defined surface, it was far easier for players to sense where they and their foes were in the three-dimensional space, thus overcoming the awkwardness of the initial 'first-person *Space Invaders*' concept. The player experience was further enhanced by another key decision: to use a 'spinner' controller rather than a traditional joystick.

"The controller has a fabulous feel when you spin it," agrees Dave. "Just the right amount of resistance and just the right amount of angular momentum when you stop applying the force. I know we didn't have it with the *Space Invaders* game, because that was motion left and right on a semi-flat surface. We must have switched to this controller when we changed to the *Tempest* gameplay, with the action around the top edge of the 3D cylinder tapering off into the distance. I often hear people rave about the controller when they tell me how much they loved the game. It was extremely important."

CONVERSION CAPERS

ATARI 2600

Attempting to re-create 3D vector graphics on the humble VCS was naive in the extreme, so no surprise that this fails miserably. The tubes become a muddy mess, aliens bulge awkwardly out of the confusion, and bullets flicker in and out of visibility. It's barely playable yet, given the machine's limitations, this remains an impressive technical achievement, with four of the original's enemies featured and just about recognisable. It was canned in 1984, which may have been the best result all round.



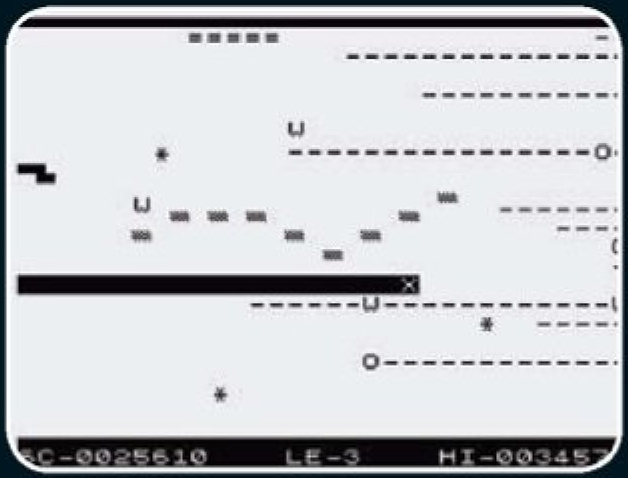
ATARI 5200

A boxed version of the game can be spotted in the film *Cloak & Dagger*, but tantalisingly, this remained unreleased until a prototype version finally surfaced in 1998. Though this release was only 50 per cent complete, lacking collision detection and with Flippers as the only enemy present, the game looked very promising, both visually and play-wise. See the excellent **www.atariprotos.com** for more on these valiant efforts to bring an acceptable version of *Tempest* to an Atari console.



ZX81

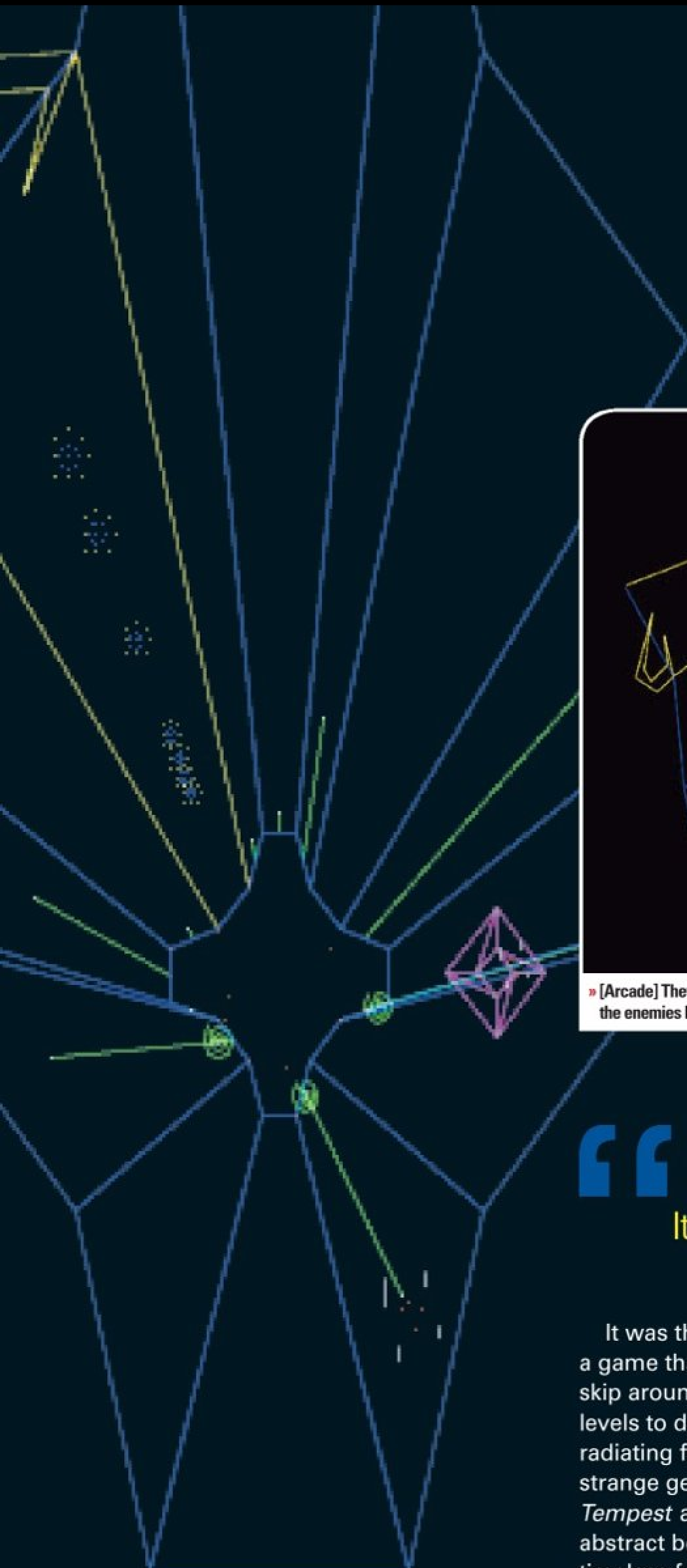
Retro Gamer's own Stuart Campbell named this as the best 8-bit arcade port back in issue 76, and who are we to argue with the Rev? Coder SP Kelly worked some sort of ASCII-based alchemy to triumphantly re-create the feel of the arcade machine, if not the vector visual stylings, on the primitive Sinclair hardware. Released by Mikro-Gen in 1983, "this is perhaps the most incredible and unlikely piece of coin-op conversion in the history of gaming", says Stu. Mr Kelly, we salute you.

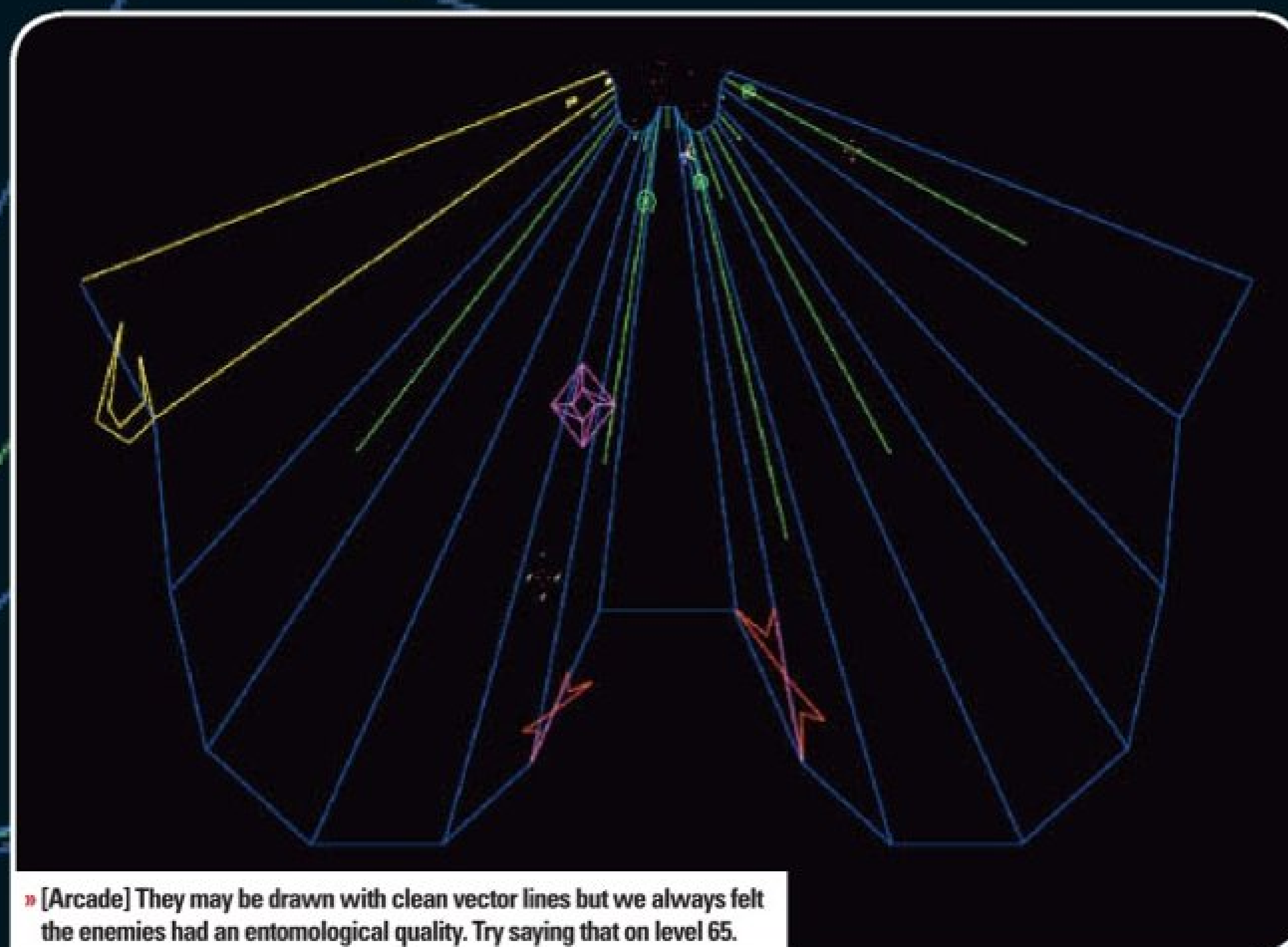


TEMPEST TUBES

Not a home version as such, though it did eventually appear on the *Atari Arcade Hits: Volume 1* PC compilation in 1999, but rather an interesting hack by arcade owner Duncan Brown. Appearing soon after the original game's release, this twisted standard *Tempest*'s levels into even more bizarre shapes, increasing the not-inconsiderable difficulty significantly in the process. *Tempest Tubes* is an intriguing reworking of Dave's game that's well worth a spin.







» [Arcade] They may be drawn with clean vector lines but we always felt the enemies had an entomological quality. Try saying that on level 65.

> "The colour vector hardware could do things on screen never done before. It was 3D. It was fast. It was new! And Dave made it do magical things…"

It was the perfect control setup for a game that required you to swiftly skip around the rim of cylindrical levels to deal with multiple dangers radiating from its centre. Those strange geometric shapes gave *Tempest* a unique visual appeal, an abstract beauty that lent the game a timeless feel. Did Dave have a definite artistic vision for his project?

"We had the limits of our vector hardware to keep in mind," he notes. "It kept things sweet and simple. It's also nice to have it abstract when it involves blowing things up; I don't like explicit graphic violence. I do love fireworks, though, and the colour vector display gave me a chance to do a cool fireworks show when you get a high score. Also, the Super Zapper gave us a chance for another cool graphics display."

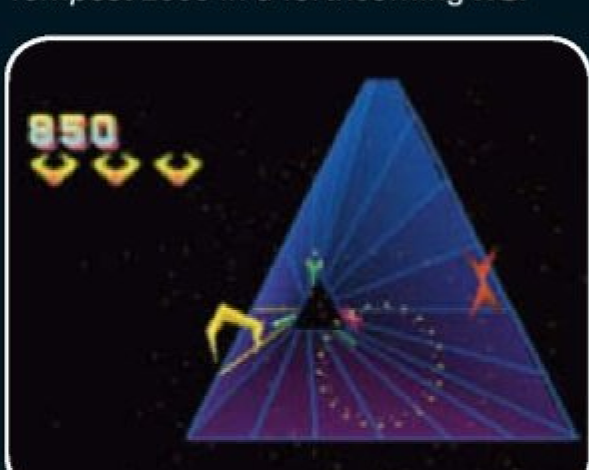
Ah, the wonderful Super Zapper, which gave the player a last-gasp chance to destroy his foes as they overwhelmed his position and began creeping ominously towards his ship along the outer edge. Used once, it could be devastating; used again during the same wave and its effect was muted, leaving you to fight unaided until the next level, when it was thankfully recharged. Ending each stage also brought a memorable surprise, as your ship plunged into the hole, requiring some swift manoeuvring to avoid being impaled on deadly green spikes that had grown like accelerated stalagmites during the fray.

A further surprise awaited the player before they even began blasting. An options screen offered them the chance to select their start level, and choosing a higher stage to begin on would reward them with a greater bonus. It was a clever feature, dubbed 'skill-step', which allowed expert players to skip straight to the challenging stuff and boost their high scores, while not alienating newbies. "Yes, that was my idea," smiles Dave. "We wanted to maximise the fun time/total play time ratio. It was also to satisfy me and the other players in the lab. We didn't have all day to play the game…"

And play it they did. The ethos at Atari's coin-op division at the time seems to be one of friendly rivalry, with engineers encouraged to play their colleagues' games as they were in development and make useful suggestions, while still hoping their own project would be the one to triumph in the arcades. "Everybody would love to have a hit game," laughs Dave, "but it was a friendly environment at Atari. People felt free and open about saying anything, positive or negative, about a game. It was up to the developer to be able to handle the feedback without getting his ego involved."

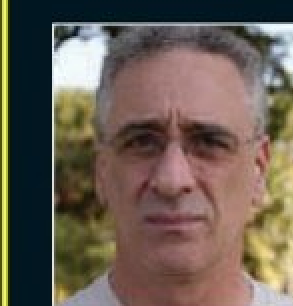
TEMPEST 2000

Jeff Minter had been a huge fan of *Tempest* since discovering it in a Piccadilly Circus arcade one wet afternoon in the early Eighties. He thus jumped at the chance of revisiting the game for the Jaguar a decade later and produced a staggeringly good version, which kept the spirit of the original but gave it a flavour all his own. He went on to code *Tempest 3000* for the Nuon – probably the best game you've never played. Look for a full making of *Tempest 2000* in a forthcoming **RG**.



TEMPEST MEMORIES

We asked the creators of some of the finest vector games ever written for their memories of Tempest and the man who made it



ED ROTBERG (BATTLEZONE)

My favourite memory of *Tempest* was how it started. Dave was supposed to be working on 'first-person *Space Invaders*' and we used to kid him about how his first attempts looked like things attacking you on a bowling alley. One day, we came in and the whole game had changed into *Tempest*! It was, like most of Dave's work, mind-numbingly good. He understood what made a game fun, and most importantly, he was willing to completely rewrite his game, if that is what it took to find that fun. With *Tempest*, you always felt like you could do better and you simply couldn't wait to drop another quarter in to prove that! It was, for its time, visually stunning, followed the classic 'easy to learn, hard to master' paradigm, and had that special Theurer magic. Dave was, and still is, just a terrific guy. Salt of the earth and all that. I still count him as a very good friend. When he used to have a full beard, my first wife would always tell me how he looked like a Norse god!



ED LOGG (ASTEROIDS)

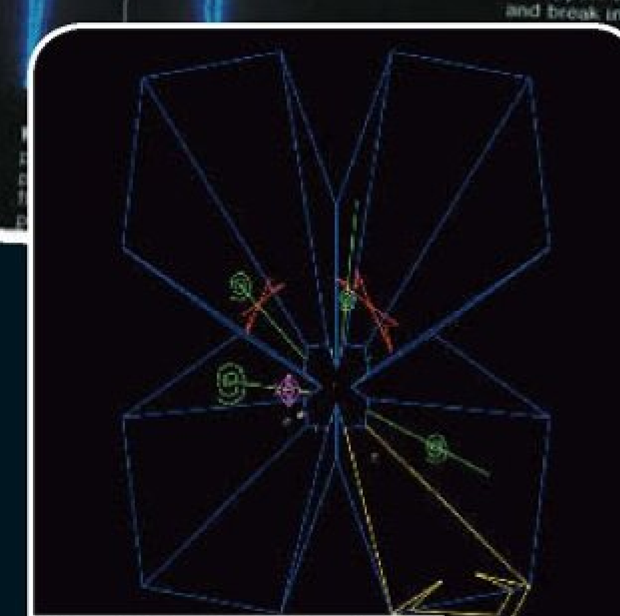
We were doing 'walkabouts' at Atari at the time when *Tempest* was being developed. Walkabouts were used to get everyone at Atari to play your game and leave comments, one Friday a month, I believe. I'm sure Dave would have listened to any constructive criticism of gameplay from anyone. He was known for rewriting games if he felt they were not what he wanted. This was very unusual at Atari. I'm not sure if the final *Tempest* was his second try or his third. I remember one of Dave's first games was a soccer game with a trackball, a take-off of *Atari Football*. The problem was, you were so tired after one game you couldn't play another even if you wanted to! *Tempest* sold 30,000 units, so it was a very popular game. I'm not sure if it was the first game that allowed you to start at higher levels, but if it was, this certainly would have made *Tempest* a landmark for developers and players.

THE MAKING OF



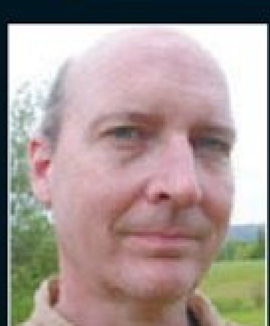
» The original arcade flyer was a lavish gatefold affair, proudly detailing the many new features seen in *Tempest*





» [Arcade] Watch out for the spikes as you hurtle towards the next stage.

TEMPEST MEMORIES



TIM SKELLY (STAR CASTLE, WARRIOR)

When I first saw *Tempest*, possibly at Mother's arcade in Chicago, possibly at another arcade or two, I found it so cool. I was totally blown away. The colour vectors were terrific, of course, but what really knocked me off my feet was the sense of depth that sucked me in, almost literally! Interestingly, if my memory serves, I only had a slight connection with true colour vectors. My Cinematronics games were given colour overlays, as in *Armor Attack* and *Star Castle*. It was only when I moved to Gremlin/Sega that I was able to experiment with colour vectors as a programmer and designer. However, this was only for a short time, as I wanted to get away from vector graphics for a while. But enough about me! All hail *Tempest*! One of the most innovative and beautiful videogames ever made!



OWEN RUBIN (MAJOR HAVOC, SPACE DUEL)

I was supposed to get the first colour vector game for *Space Duel*, but when *Asteroids Deluxe* came out, they decided that *Space Duel* was too soon behind and pushed it back in the schedule. So the colour vector system went to *Tempest*, as did some of the vector work I created plus some sound routines, so that was cool. It wasn't a big deal, as I got an improved one for *Space Duel* as they worked out the kinks. I got an even better one for *Major Havoc* with some of my own changes, like sparkling vectors. The colour vector hardware was fragile. It didn't catch fire or anything, but it would constantly blow out the deflection amps and the monitor would stop working. It was also slower than the monochrome version at first, so you couldn't draw as much. I knew Dave very well, and played *Tempest* all the time during development… and found a few bugs, too! I thought the original *Space Invaders* concept sucked big time but, as it evolved, it was obvious *Tempest* was going to be great.

Fortunately, Dave was hearing good things about his game. The project took almost a year from initial idea to final release, and once the 3D *Space Invaders* concept was ditched, Dave remembers development being generally smooth. However, as we probe deeper, we discover that an early iteration of *Tempest* wasn't quite as well received as the one we all know and love today. In fact, it made people sick.

"The first version had the surface moving and the player's object stationary," he recalls. "Personally, I got nauseated after working on it for a period of time. Some others had a similar reaction. This version didn't last long and was eliminated a long time before field-testing. No one got sick on the machine, but it did put a damper on one's desire to keep playing it!"

We briefly ponder the thought of vomit buckets being attached to arcade cabinets before inquiring about those crucial field tests. Their importance cannot be overestimated.

> "The first version of Tempest had the surface moving and the player's ship stationary. It made people feel nauseous"
>
> **We never get sick of the final version, though**

An overflowing cash box after a week out in a real arcade could lead to a huge production run for your game. An empty one could result in a project a programmer has laboured over for months or years languishing as a prototype forever. Just how anxious was Dave before *Tempest* was sent out into the field, given that the game was such a radically different proposition for players, both visually and gameplay-wise?

"No, we weren't nervous about it," he states. "It was new, exciting technology coupled with new, fun gameplay. We all loved playing it and were eager to get it out there and see how it would do. We would deliver it ourselves to the arcade in a truck and then stand back and watch the action. Often players would line up and put their quarters on the bezel to reserve their spot. We'd try to blend into the background, but stand close enough so we could get feedback from players' initial reactions. Observing difficulties of new players, and resolving them, was key to making your game more popular."

Which brings us back to the small issue of what to christen their baby. After noting the unfortunate association between the *Vortex* name and a feminine hygiene product, a new moniker had to be chosen, as Dave explains.

"Getting the right name for the game took a lot of effort and time. We started out calling it *Aliens*. The movie *Alien* had come out, so there was some identification, but some of us thought it was too close to the film name. So we came up with *Vortex*, since the first level was a cylinder, and



» [Arcade] While most levels are cylindrical, others have a horizontal layout, a nod to the original 'first-person *Space Invaders*' concept.



TEAM TEMPEST

Though *Tempest* was primarily Dave's baby, he is quick to give credit to his collaborators. "Morgan Hoff was the project leader. He was very calm, thorough and analytical about handling the development process and keeping all the various phases of the project in sync. Mary Pepper was the technician. Doug Snyder was the hardware engineer. He was funny; occasionally when the PC board wouldn't work, he'd pick it up about six inches off the workbench and drop it. This would often reseat the chips and it would start working again. Another time, we couldn't get the dev system to work; it turned out that the board had gotten so hot that the solder, which held in some of the chips, had melted and they had literally fallen out of the board onto the bench below!"



you go swirling down it like a vortex at the end of the wave. The prototype *Tempest* game I have in my garage has a bezel with the name *Vortex* on it, but when we decided it had to be changed, Morgan [Hoff, the project leader] and I came up with a big list of potential names. Lots of folks at Atari associated with the game voted on their favourite name and *Tempest* was the winner. I had lobbied for that name so I was happy!"

Democracy triumphed and so did the newly titled *Tempest*, selling an impressive 30,000 units and introducing the sparkling QuadraScan Video Display Unit to arcades. It was the perfect calling card for Atari's colour vector hardware; a game that showcased both pioneering visuals and innovative play mechanics, paving the way for the massively popular *Star Wars*, along with brilliantly experimental titles like *Major Havoc* and *Black Widow*.

Perhaps perfection isn't quite the right term, though. Just before the final version of *Tempest* was about to go into production, Dave noticed something that bothered him. An Atari logo on the start screen didn't look quite right. He decided to fix this tiny detail, but his solution had some unforeseen consequences…

"It was lopsided enough to make some players think, subconsciously perhaps, that something just didn't look right," says Dave, "so I adjusted the layout of the screen at the last minute. I forgot that I had booby trapped the game so that if game pirates changed our screen by replacing 'Atari' with their own company name, it would trash a random location in memory after a delay of a few minutes, so they wouldn't be able to easily detect this with a hardware analyser. If the score was in a certain range, I'd take a couple of the digits from the score, and use that to come up with the hardware address in RAM to trash. Of course, the coin counter was in RAM, and that got trashed if the digits in the score pointed to that address. It took us two months to figure out the cause!"

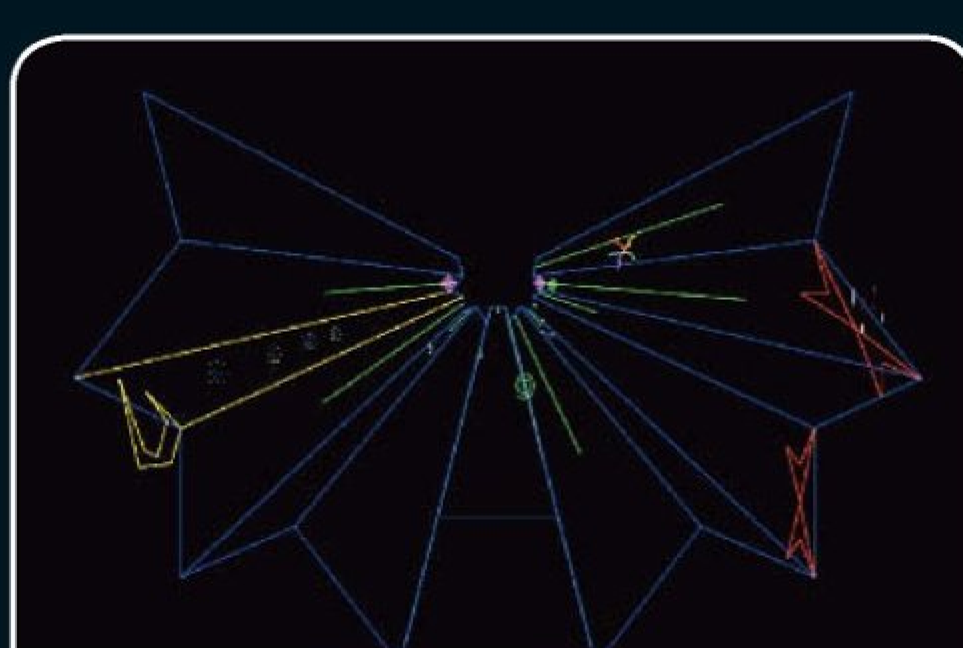
Thus some fortunate players would unexpectedly receive 40 free credits, which was rather handy given the difficulty of the game at higher levels. Fuseball and Pulsar Tankers, which split into two evil enemies when shot, would appear from levels 33 and 40 respectively, and those master blasters who could reach stage 65 would be presented with the disorienting prospect of invisible tunnels. The brutal challenge that *Tempest* presents is perhaps one of the reasons why it remains such an iconic title.

"I still enjoy playing *Tempest* if it's on a platform with a spinner controller," says Dave, proudly. "It feels good and it looks pretty; lots of colours, cool shapes, explosions and visual surprises, like blasting down the playing field at the end of a wave and then the cool feeling of lifting off the bottom of the platform into space. It's sort of exhilarating…"

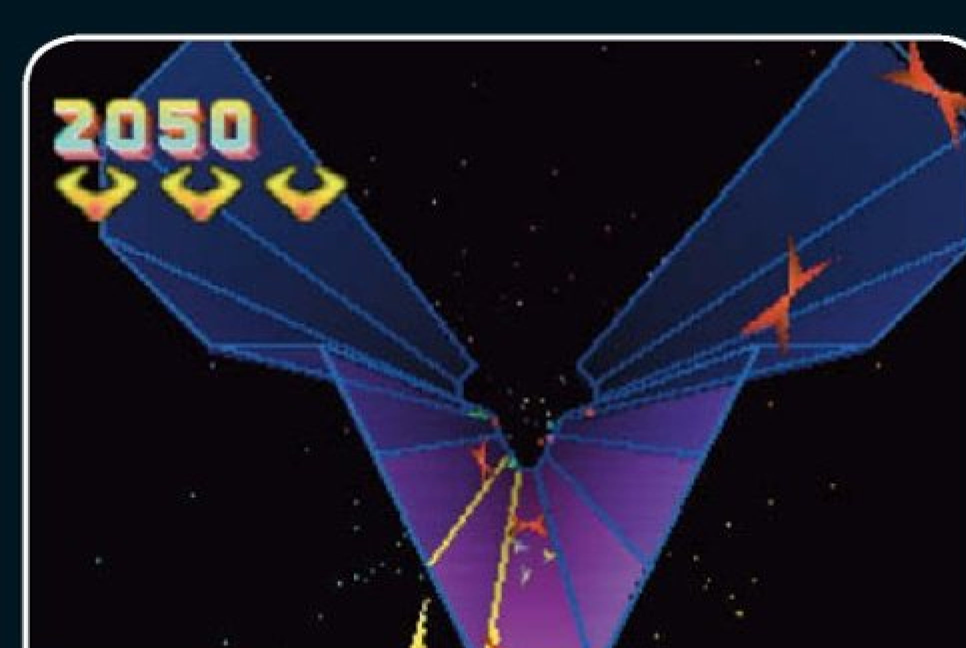
Despite his obvious affection for the game, Dave never contemplated a sequel to *Tempest*. He preferred to work on new technology and, indeed, his next project was the equally groundbreaking *I, Robot*, a marvellously ambitious game that pioneered the use of polygon graphics. So, with his time in the tunnels over, we wonder whether that childhood dream of sinister creatures emerging from the earth ever reoccurred.

"Never again," Dave assures us. "Those nightmares were from a very short period when I was very young."

And we were left with a dream of a game…



» [Arcade] *Tempest Tubes* was an intriguing hack that twisted Dave's designs into even stranger shapes.



» [Jaguar] The mighty *Tempest 2000*. A 'making of' feature is in the RG pipeline, Minter fans.

Minority Report

Look beyond the most iconic systems and more widely celebrated titles of gaming, and what you find are many lesser mentioned games offering equally memorable experiences. Rory Milne tracks some of them down...



SWORD OF DESTINY

■ SYSTEM: C16 ■ DEVELOPER: MICRO PROJECTS ■ YEAR: 1985

» C16



» [C16] Venturing into the Abyss of Death, the heartland of an evil warlock.

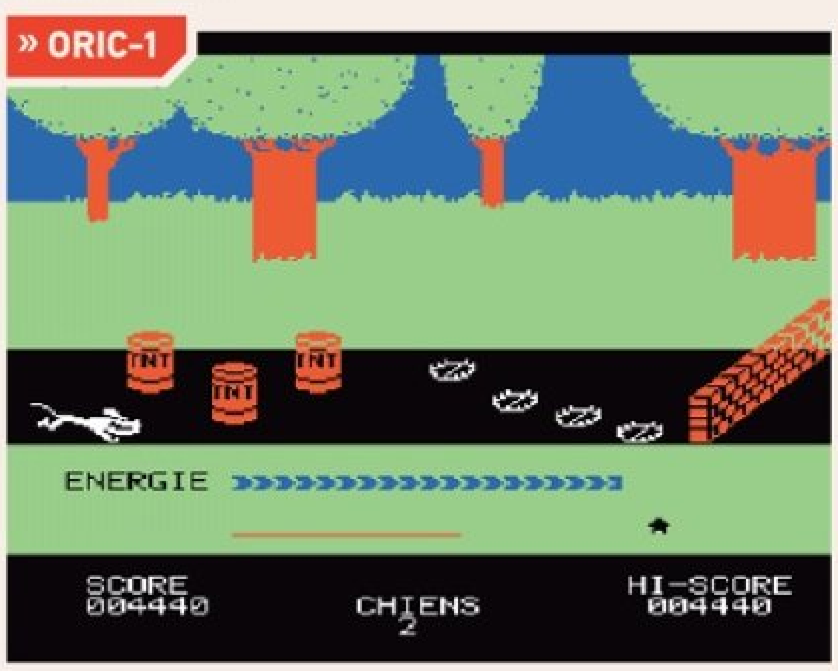
■ **The Commodore 16 was proposed in 1983 in order to address a number of concerns. It would be Commodore's new budget system, replacing the ageing VIC-20, and would compete not only against computers imminently expected from Japan, but also the cheaper systems of CBM's rivals – Sinclair in Europe, and Texas Instruments in the States. When the system launched the following year, though, TI had left the computer market, Sinclair had dropped its prices, and the Japanese invasion had plateaued.**

With no budget opposition stateside, and a cheaper system already entrenched in Europe, the C16 lacked purpose and was seen as a risk by many publishers. However, Gremlin Graphics, among others, took their chances, often releasing high-quality fare such as Micro Projects' *Sword Of Destiny*.

Defeated and slain by the evil warlock Xorphas, his heart torn brutally from his chest, the spirit of the legendary warrior Kelok, a wandering soul with no chance of respite, now faces an eternity of torment. With hope all but lost, and only the magical Sword of Destiny to protect himself, Kelok ventures into the heartland of his enemy, a place so vile that it is only mentioned in whispers: the Abyss of Death. Somewhere in the depths of this hellish labyrinth lies the warrior's heart, without which Kelok can never rest in peace.

Death's guardians haunt the path to his salvation: ghostly apparitions, the yellowed skulls of the damned, creatures of the night and their familiars, all of which drain vital astral

» ORIC-1



» DOGGY

■ SYSTEM: ORIC-1
■ DEVELOPER: ERIC CHAHI ■ YEAR: 1984

■ **In this early** offering from the talented developer of *Another World*, you play a lost dog trying to get home. This is actually a very cheerful game, with colourful cartoon graphics and an enthusiastic rendition of *In The Mood* playing during proceedings. En route to your kennel, you face a side-scrolling obstacle course littered with traps, roadblocks, TNT and fallen trees – all of which have to be sidestepped or leapt over. Collisions drain an energy bar, and an on-screen meter measures your progress towards home. Though simplistic, the gaming on offer is remarkably compulsive and beautifully presented.

» PC ENGINE CD



» STAR PARODIA

■ SYSTEM: PC ENGINE CD
■ DEVELOPER: HUDSON SOFT ■ YEAR: 1992

■ **There can be** few better ways of commemorating the sad passing of Hudson Soft than by putting some quality time into this celebration of everything that made it so great. Genre-wise, we're in vertical shoot-'em-up territory, playing either Bomberman, the *Star Soldier* ship or a PC Engine – no, really. Hudson Soft references abound – the Hudson locomotive, the spacecraft from *Gunhed*, and even HuCards are all fitted in. The difficulty curve is perfectly pitched, with a gentle introductory level allowing you to acclimatise before the screen fills with projectiles, power-ups and cameo-making protagonists.

» SATURN



» ASTAL

■ SYSTEM: SATURN
■ DEVELOPER: SEGA ENTERPRISES ■ YEAR: 1995

■ **Beautiful hand-drawn** backgrounds, parallax scrolling, surreal characters and superlative platforming weren't enough to ensure success for this early Saturn effort, as 2D gaming had fallen out of fashion. The role of your character is that of a protector, attempting to rescue a female counterpart and restore order to an otherworldly realm. Nightmarish creatures stand in your way, but moves like blowing opponents away and two-fisted aerial attacks help keep the gameplay fresh. Also of note are the accomplished visual effects and ambitious mechanics, which make good use of the hardware.

» [C16] Making use of a hot air flue to soar up from out of the depths.



» [C16] Discovering a dimly glowing artefact that will mystically reveal the way out.





» ABOUT THE SYSTEM

- The C16 replaced the ageing VIC-20, becoming Commodore's new low-cost system.
- It was intended to compete against European, American and Japanese budget rivals.
- US demand for cheap computers waned, Japanese imports plateaued, and key European manufacturer Sinclair dropped its prices, leaving the C16 without a market.

power when they attack, but restore it if vanquished. Falls from height and Kelok's use of his sword also deplete this essential energy source, which is no small matter, as it serves to animate his spirit, and therefore his flight from purgatory depends on maintaining this ethereal life force.

His journey is only made harder by the incantations cast on each of the chambers in the shadowy lair. These trap him within unless he can locate a dimly glowing artefact that mystically reveals the way out. As these often lie deep within each chamber, Kelok must make good use of the hot air flues found in the abyss to make his way back up from the depths, as when jumped upon, their updraft will launch the warrior skyward.

The C16 has its fair share of action adventures, but *Sword Of Destiny* has to be one of the most attractive, with large, smoothly animated sprites and detailed backgrounds that make excellent use of the system's colour palette. The audio, although limited to sound effects, serves its purpose, and the title's central mechanics of fight and avoid alongside collecting and platforming are a well-worked combination. At 100 flick screens, the gaming area is also pretty vast considering the host machine's memory limitations. Most importantly, these different aspects of the title have been lovingly pieced together, with slick presentation throughout.

Of course, the failing of many games is misjudged gameplay, but thankfully this doesn't apply to *Sword Of Destiny*. Its difficulty level is near-perfect, it seldom feels unfair, and you always want to have just one more go.



» [C16] Ghostly apparitions and creatures of the night haunt the path to salvation.



» MAZE

■ SYSTEM: VIC-20
■ DEVELOPER: HES ■ YEAR: 1983

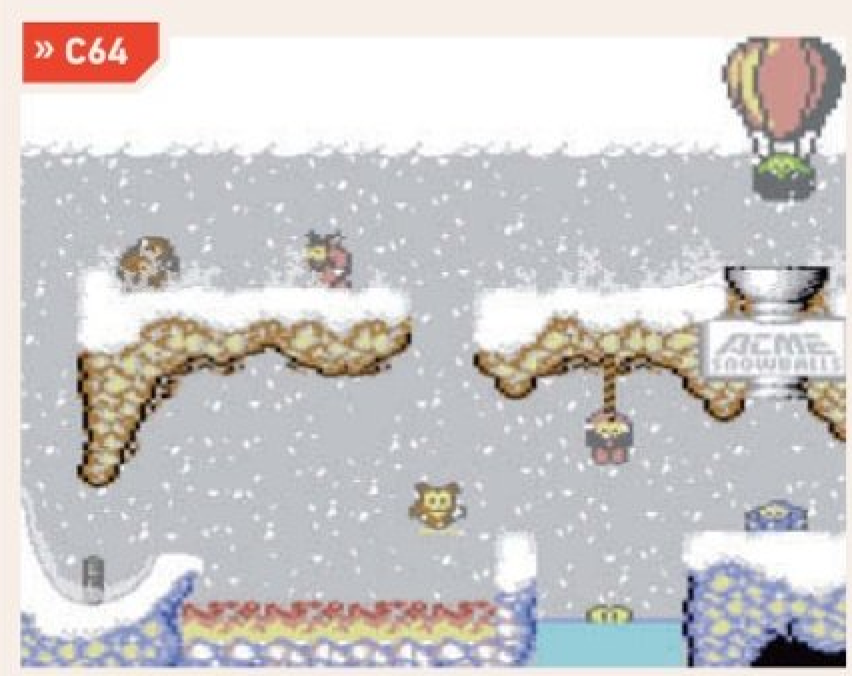
■ **Equipped with only** a few bombs and thoughts of treasure, you set off into a smooth-scrolling maze infested with one-eyed robots and murderous red smileys. Treasure, once found, must be returned to the maze's start; retrieve it all and you get a key that unlocks a door leading to the next round. Your bombs are unreliable, though, with each being of varying destructive force and your dogged foes adept at avoiding their blasts. Tight controls, however, ensure that the frantic action never frustrates, and in terms of gameplay, *Maze* is an impressive achievement, with little compromise based on the system's limitations.



» SHINOBI II: THE SILENT FURY

■ SYSTEM: GAME GEAR
■ DEVELOPER: SEGA ■ YEAR: 1992

■ ***Shinobi*'s first Game Gear** outing is often praised, but its sequel is equally worthy. Your mission is threefold: rescue four fellow ninjas, retrieve five elemental crystals, then defeat your sworn enemy, the Black Ninja. As with its predecessor, the animation in *The Silent Fury* is smooth, and the fight-and-collect formula works well, but the gameplay has been subtly improved upon. Locations can now be revisited, allowing exploration of inaccessible areas after rescuing differently skilled ninjas. This is key to finding crystals, and results in far less linear gaming, which adds to this polished gem's replay value.



» CREATURES 2: TORTURE TROUBLE

■ SYSTEM: C64
■ DEVELOPER: APEX ■ YEAR: 1992

■ **Released late in** the C64's commercial lifespan, this gorgeous, maddeningly addictive platform/puzzler deserves a much higher profile. Essentially, you have to solve devious puzzles, utilising inanimate objects and wild animals, in order to free creatures called Fuzzies from horrible fates involving acid, campfires and chainsaws. The puzzles, which require lateral thinking and patience, are set over three platform-laden, demon-ridden islands, interspersed with skill-based bonus levels and underwater island hops. Although brutally hard, this is a seriously compulsive game. It's also a classic in its own right.

THE Dungeon MASTERS

A quarter of a century after FTL's dungeon-crawling classic captivated an entire generation, Damien McFerran catches up with the key members of the team to talk about the incredible influence of this game-changing RPG

Incredible as it may seem to those of us who can vividly recall hunching over a glowing monitor, painstakingly tracing out maps on graph paper, 2012 marks the 25th anniversary of FTL's genre-defining action role-play game *Dungeon Master*. **Retro Gamer** recently caught up with several members of the original development team to talk about the production of this amazing title, its legacy and what the future holds for the series. In attendance were Doug Bell (director, programmer), Wayne Holder (producer), Mike Newton (second unit director, programmer), Russ Boelhauf (marketing director), and Nancy Holder (writer).

When making *Dungeon Master*, what were your main sources of inspiration, both individually and as a team?

Wayne Holder: Well, several people on the team had *Dungeons & Dragons* experience, and we also got really tired of the little stick-figure dungeon games that we were seeing and we wanted to do something that had real graphics. I remember we talked about that a lot at the time.

Doug Bell: My inspirations for getting into the business were *Ultima II* and *Wizardry*, and seeing those games and thinking, 'Well, I could do that'.

WH: You do remember the primary reason why we did *Dungeon Master*?

Russ Boelhauf: Girls? [eruptions of laughter]

WH: Well, apart from that! We'd just shipped *Sundog*, and it was selling like crazy and we had no plan for a sequel, or anything – we hadn't planned on success. So *Dungeon Master* was going to be the quick 'knock off' game. It eventually took us two years to write!

Mike Newton0: I think part of the inspiration was not the source material or the subject matter, but was the sudden availability of equipment that everybody could own that had really cool graphics ability.

WH: Yeah, the Atari ST really changed things.

RB: And probably another thing was movies. We wanted to replicate that cinematic experience.

MN: I remember one thing we used to talk about was the opening scene in *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, where he goes in and pulls the head and the big stone falls…

WH: That was the inspiration for the whole puzzle idea.

MN: Right. And the idea behind the



whole labyrinth and first-person view that was used.

WH: It was interesting trying to come up with something that would seem realistic on a machine that didn't have the capability to do anything like real 3D.

We can vividly recall being scared witless by *Dungeon Master* on more than one occasion. Did you deliberately try to create moments of terror for the player?

Nancy Holder: Yes.

DB: And that's Nancy Holder, writer of several horror novels! [laughs]

NH: We tried to make it scary so that the player could feel engaged. We tried with background noises and all kinds of other things to make it creepy.

WH: Stuff that I didn't think would be scary was scary. Like you'd forget there was a Mummy right around the corner at the start of the game, and you would go in to do testing and this thing would scream at you – that caught me off guard a number of times! My daughter Belle, who is now 15, was playing *Dungeon Master* on an Atari ST about a year or so ago and she got totally stressed when she ran into the Mummy, she was almost panicking. It still works!

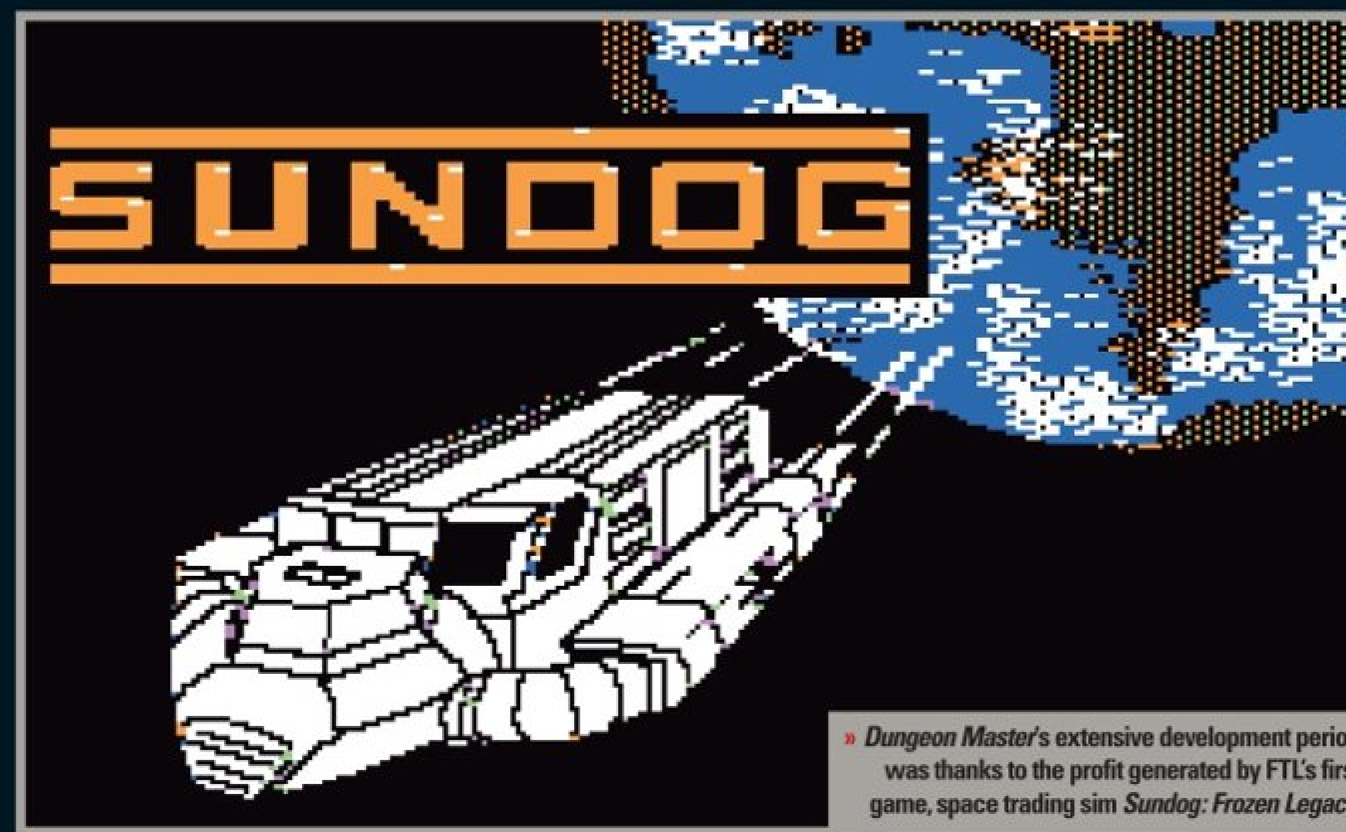
DB: I think the puzzle element helped us. When you're sitting there trying to figure something out, that was usually just the right moment to hit you with something that you weren't expecting!

What element of the game do you feel presented the biggest technical challenge?

DB: Sound was a big one because the chip in the Atari ST was only designed to do bleeps and looped tones. Wayne was the one who figured out how to make the Atari ST sound chip do digital sound, and that was after Mike spent a couple of weeks at least trying to get some type of reasonable sound from that chip.



» Doug Bell shows his videogame-obsessed son, Sean, *Dungeon Master* for the first time. How he kept it quiet for so long, we're not sure.



» *Dungeon Master's* extensive development period was thanks to the profit generated by FTL's first game, space trading sim *Sundog: Frozen Legacy.*

MN: A major technical challenge in general was just making it real time, making the graphics fit within, what was it? How big was the memory?

DB: It had to fit into 512k. We ended up with about 380k – the rest of it was unreclaimable from the operating system.

MN: So between the limited processing power and the limited memory, to make that all run real time was a pretty big challenge.

DB: So far, the games at that point had all been turn-based and you could take as long as you wanted to think about what you were going to do next, and we knew we wanted to put the player under the pressure of time.

WH: Most people responded to the graphics but I think that was really what defined the game more than anything else. The fact that it was real time and it was this complete simulation; people were amazed to find out that everything, everywhere was being simulated all the time.

DB: 'Cause we weren't smart enough to figure out how to do it any other way!

NH: Also, you had a big question about how to introduce people into the world. You didn't know if you should have a list of character traits and have you pick your name, or should you just make the person feel like those things were chosen – how do you go from being a player to being 'in' the game?

WH: There were some of us that weren't hardcore gamers who just wanted to pick a character and get going, and there were the purists who wanted the character 'just so'. I was surprised that was such a big issue; there was a big schism in the team about that.

MN: I remember Andy Jaros, who did all the graphical stuff, made this character construction kit where you could not only have a moustache, you could have 32 different moustaches, so you got just the right moustache. And every female character had a number of brassieres she could wear. [lots of laughing all round]

DB: The fact that we had people on the team who weren't gamers

DUNGEON MASTER BESTIARY



SCREAMER
Although it resembles a harmless tree, the Screamer is actually a mobile and highly aggressive enemy. It emits a high-pitched shrieking scream – hence the name – and drops edible chunks when killed.



TROLIN
Slime-covered, club-welding brutes, Trolin move around in packs and can quickly dispatch any adventurers foolish enough to oppose them unprepared. Once slain, some Trolins drop a wooden club.



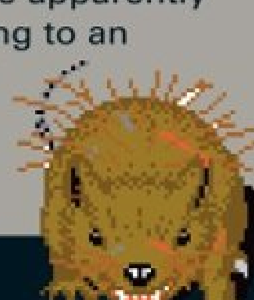
WIZARD EYE
Also known as Beholders, these freakish floating masses of eyeballs are capable of casting harmful spells against your party. They can also open doors using magic, so hiding from them can be quite difficult.



GIGGLER
One of the few enemies in the game that can't actually damage you, the Giggler instead pilfers items from your character's hands before running off. Chase them down to reclaim your valuable items.



PAIN RAT
Blood-soaked vermin with razor-sharp teeth and a terrible temper, Pain Rats are another valuable source of food in Dungeon Master. Rat drumsticks are apparently more appealing to an explorer than you might assume.



GIANT SCORPION
A massive monster covered in a tough protective shell and capable of dealing out incredible damage to your party, the Giant Scorpion is certainly not a foe to be taken lightly. Keep on your toes and try to trap it in a doorway.



SKELETON
To look at them, you'd assume that these spindly warriors posed no great threat, but the reanimated skeletons in *Dungeon Master* are ferocious opponents, capable of swift movement and quick, deadly attacks.



ANIMATED ARMOUR
An incredibly tough enemy thanks to its thick protective armour, these ghostly warriors will cut your team to shreds in seconds. Carefully planning can win the day, and once killed they drop armour.



VEXIRK
Don't let the diminutive dimensions of these pint-sized wizards fool you – they're able to cast some pretty dramatic spells against your group. Thankfully, they're weak against melee attacks.



Dungeon Master Besitary cont...



MUMMY
This bandaged baddie is the first monster you meet in the game, and arguably one of the most iconic. It's also been the cause of many soiled undergarments among novice players.



GHOST
Because of their otherworldly, supernatural nature, you'll need a special weapon to defeat the malevolent spirits that roam the dungeon. Certain spells are effective, but not all of them are useful in banishing the ghoul.



MAGENTA WORM
This slimy foe is especially dangerous when encountered in large numbers, but success in battle gains you access to a supply of nutritious and delicious Worm Rounds, which can be eaten to restore your stamina.

GIANT WASP
These flying insects move quickly and can be tricky to hit with a melee attack, but if you're prepared you can use projectiles to bring them down without incurring any damage from their stingers.



ROCKPILE
Initially appearing as a harmless pile of rubble and wood, closer inspection reveals a deadly monster lurking underneath. They use their disguise to catch unwary individuals. Time your attacks carefully.



LORD CHAOS
The antagonist of Dungeon Master, and the reason that you and your allies are taking up arms. He cannot be harmed by spells or weapons, so you'll have to find another way to bring him to his knees.



actually saved the game from being an extension of what had already been done. Some people said 'I don't wanna go and pick my stats, let me just pick a picture'. So we came up with a compromise was that you could 'resurrect' or 'reincarnate'. You could either get them with their stats, or you get them and start fresh.

Were there any ideas that didn't quite make it into the final version of the game?

DB: Yes. We actually maxed out the one disc and the RAM, and that pretty much defined when we had to be done!

MN: But there were no good ideas that didn't make it into the game.

WH: I think that one of the more interesting periods of development was when we were all developing the different puzzles and trying them on each other. Dennis Walker, who was assistant director on the game, had taken a class at the University of California about some kind of theory that if you get interrupted halfway through doing something, you won't remember how to go back and complete the task. So he created this puzzle that was based on that theory; I don't remember which one it was, but that it was one of the puzzles that everybody swore at, because you couldn't ever get through it as you kept getting distracted!

DB: In terms of ideas that didn't make it into the game, we had many things we would do and somebody else on the team wouldn't really like it, and I think that it was the willingness to have the one person outweigh the rest of the team that really forced us to find better ways to do things.

WH: There was the big discussion we had about just reaching in and grabbing stuff, you remember that?

DB: Yeah. I was working on this complex system on where you could look down at the floor and you could pick up things around you, and Wayne says 'Well, it's right there, why can't I just reach in and pick it up?' That was sort of a 'Well, yeah' moment. And Wayne was actually responsible for a lot of those moments. He would just come in and say 'Why don't you do it that way?'

> "I look at people talking about the chronology of computer games and somehow we seem to be left out of a lot of those. It doesn't quite seem right" Doug Bell

WH: I didn't have to program, so I thought it was easy to do!

RB: Forget everything you've read about Steve Jobs, this is the man! [laughs]

What are your fondest memories from the development period? What stands out as being a real highlight for you?

DB: Most of it, actually. We did a lot of stuff together. We did dinners, volleyball, movies… It was a really, really fun time. We were more family than business. And all the time Wayne was probably looking at the finances was wondering what was going on! [laughs]

WH: It was really kind of cool, especially after *Sundog* was released and became a hit – we kind of had some money coming in. And we could be a little less stressed about the whole thing; it was easy to just relax and think about doing the game. I think that's why we spent so long doing it; we got so caught up in it that we just didn't want to let it out of the door until it was as good as we could possibly make it. It didn't make any business sense of course, but still.

RB: When we sent things out to beta testers, and we had various comments back…

MN: Oh, those were the best.



» [Atari ST] Every item in the game has a weight, and loading your champions with too much stuff can prove detrimental.



» [Atari ST] The beginning of the game sees you selecting your four champions.



RB: Especially the guy who sent it back after having axed it! [laughs]

WH: We had a game come back to us with the message: 'Take this aggravating piece of shit and shove it up your ass'. The disc was chopped to pieces with an axe, it was just shredded!

MN: It was funny, but at the same time it was just a little frightening!

RB: I really loved how we brainstormed on stuff; we had the huge whiteboard onto which we just wrote every idea down.

DB: Pain Rats from hell! [laughs]

MN: OK, I'd better explain that. At one point we had a clean whiteboard and we had about five columns and started randomly writing words to look for titles, or ideas, or whatever. And in the end they were just a bunch of words, except juxtaposed side by side were the words 'pain' in one column, 'rats' in the next and 'hell' in the following column. We were like, that's a character in the game: Pain Rats from hell! [laughs]



» [Atari ST] Monsters often attack in packs, and can tear your team to pieces if you're not prepared.

WH: Andy really got into it, he had this whole mythos behind it.

MN: He worked up a back-story on Pain Rats that wouldn't end! [laughs]

The critical reaction was amazing. How did it feel to get such overwhelming praise?

WH: It was a little bit stressful, I mean the same problem we had before – we have a success and we don't have a plan for a sequel. We hadn't really learned from the first time around. I think of Robert Rodriguez's comment that all he wanted to do when he made *El Mariachi* was to make enough money to make another film – he was not prepared for it to be successful, and I felt exactly like that.

NH: It was so time-consuming, it took everything out of you to work on that game, and it was tiring to think of the next game. You've got movie directors and sometimes they take years before they direct another movie.

THE LEGACY OF DUNGEON MASTER

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER (1991)

Westwood Studios' first-person epic had the official *Dungeons & Dragons* licence, and would go on to become possibly the most famous and enduring of all the games inspired by *Dungeon Master*. It also went on to be ported to the SNES and Game Boy Advance.



BLOODWYCH (1989)

One of the earliest clones of FTL's game, *Bloodwych* was unique because it offered two-player cooperative mode, and also allowed the player to converse with almost every character in the entire game – including your enemies as you exchanged blows. Very immersive stuff.



LANDS OF LORE (1993)

Westwood Studios' next project after losing the *Eye Of The Beholder* licence, *Lands of Lore* is one of the most accomplished first-person dungeon crawlers. The VGA visuals and excellent audio (Patrick Stewart lent his vocal talents to the CD version) made this a true classic.



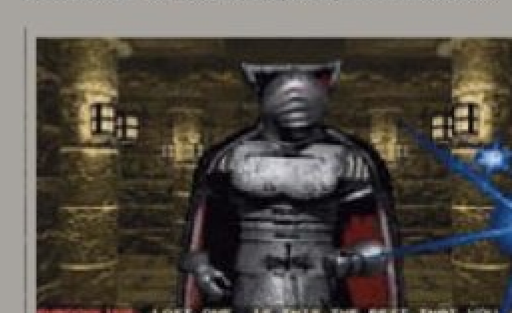
CAPTIVE (1990)

C64 legend Antony Crowther's take on the *Dungeon Master* concept was one of the few clones which attempted something new as well; it was set in the future, with the player remotely controlling a group of androids as you try to escape from a high tech prison.



STONEKEEP (1995)

One of the grandest – and most critically derided – *Dungeon Master* clones, *Stonekeep* took five years to make and cost $5 million – a lot of which was spent on the CGI introduction sequence. Hindsight shows it's not a terrible game, but not the smash hit Interplay wanted.



DOUBLE DUNGEONS (1989)

A pretty dismal effort for NEC's beloved PC Engine console, *Double Dungeons* featured laughable graphics and slow, plodding action. However, regardless of the quality, it's proof that *Dungeon Master*'s influence could be felt all over the globe.



SHINING IN THE DARKNESS (1991)

Hailed by many as a *Dungeon Master* beater upon its release, *Shining In The Darkness* isn't a real-time endeavour, and instead relies on the Japanese RPG staple of turn-based combat and random encounters. It's still well worth a look, however.



ARCANA (1992)

Produced by HAL Laboratories – now a first-party Nintendo studio – Arcana is essentially a clone of Sega's *Shining In The Darkness*. However, it boasts better visuals, music, and has random encounters, making it a worthwhile purchase for fans of the genre.



BLACK CRYPT (1992)

Notable for being the first commercial release by Raven Games (*Heretic, Hexen*), *Black Crypt* is something of an underrated gem. It was unique for being one of the first games of this type to include an auto-mapping feature, accessed via a spell.



LEGEND OF GRIMROCK (2012)

Described by developer Almost Human as a loving tribute to the original *Dungeon Master*, this recent release takes the core of FTL's game and gives it modern 3D graphics and improved presentation. This is what a modern take on *Dungeon Master* looks like.





» [Atari ST] Food and water are essential to survival, with your team needing both to regain health, stamina and mana.



» [Atari ST] The game's unique mouse-driven interface was revolutionary at the time, allowing players to fluidly interact with the environment.

DB: And everyone wanted it six weeks later!

How does it feel to know that *Dungeon Master* is still an influence on people after all this time?

NH: I just went to the World Horror Convention and met author Guido Henkel there, and he mentioned that *Dungeon Master* had been an influence on his work, and it was really exciting to hear him say that to a room full of people. I went up afterwards and said 'You mean our *Dungeon Master*?' And he said 'Yes, it was your *Dungeon Master*!' I think it's very touching; we worked so hard on it, so it's nice to hear that it made a difference.

WH: I think in a certain sense we were a little bit too early; we kinda got lost behind games like *Doom*.

DB: Personally I feel honoured when people are still talking about *Dungeon Master*, but then on the other hand I look at people talking about the chronology of computer games and somehow we seem to be left out of a lot of those. It doesn't quite seem right.

Have you ever considered working on another sequel to *Dungeon Master*, with modern tech? How would you see a modern day *Dungeon Master* working out?

MN: These projects seem to be huge undertakings now; like the equivalent of making a film nowadays.

WH: I've worked in a software house since FTL disbanded and the one thing I've learned from that is that only a really small team can do a really good job.

NH: We could get the band back together? [laughs]

WH: I said earlier that one of the coolest things was just working with other people who were that smart. It sort of becomes effortless. I used to particularly remember watching Doug and Dennis, this weird kind of duo, you'd kind of read each other's minds and you'd pass these discs back and forth over your heads and you'd kinda know what was needed next; it was mesmerising to watch.

DB: To this day, in my never to be humble opinion, Dennis is the only software engineer that I will admit is better than I am. [laughter all round]

MN: That said, and to answer your question, the answer is no – no one wants to take on writing another sequel!

DB: Actually there's a series out now which I think has captured a lot of the spirit of *Dungeon Master*, and that's *Portal*, and *Portal 2*.

NH: Oh yeah, I know *Portal* – our daughter has played those.

DB: It's in a completely different setting, but it captured the spirit of *Dungeon Master*.

WH: I've watched our daughter playing *Minecraft* and I think there are a lot of similarities between that game and *Dungeon Master*. To me, of all the stuff I've looked at, that's one of the most similar.

***Dungeon Master* would work well on a touch screen. Have you considered doing a port for the iPhone or Android?**

WH: When the iPhone first came out I thought *Dungeon Master* might work on it, but you'd have to redesign the controls a lot to make it fit…

DB: Not too much. There was no dragging involved.

WH: I guess… And thanks to Doug we still have the source code. I also have Mike's Dungeon Constructor Set source code. The single biggest business mistake that I made was not realising that we should have sold the Dungeon Constructor Set as a separate product and let people create their own stuff. I was afraid it would dilute the whole cache, and that people would come up with tacky stuff, but people like to author stuff. We did it with *Oids* later, and that was a big hit.

DB: People start sharing the levels and it keeps it alive.

WH: I also regret that we didn't consider seriously an online multiplayer mode, but the company had already disbanded by then.

MN: Online was analogous to Morse code then! Remember how many games we used to look at during development?

WH: I remember when we got visited and shown *Tetris*. I said it would never be a success!

DB: *Tetris* is a sore point for me, because the year we had *Dungeon Master* out there, and it was at the top of the charts, we were put up for the Software Publishers Association game of the year. We were one of six titles and we had all these amazing technological things we'd done and boundaries we'd pushed, and the game that won was *Tetris*, which was something you could execute in a weekend. I've never really quite recovered from that! It's been the bane of my life. I always pick complicated things to do and *Tetris* is a reminder that it doesn't have to be complicated as long as it's the right idea.



» The version of the game launched on the TurboDuo/PC Engine was actually a slimmed down edition with a linear mission structure.

If it ain't broke... clone it!

There are thousands of titles on Xbox Live Indie Games, many of which take inspiration from older games. It can be surprisingly tricky to pull off successfully, but here are some titles that do their best to take you back to the days of 10p arcades and tape loading errors!

20

Clone Of: Super Mario Kart





Wacky Karts

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Arcade/Racing
Authenticity Rating: 10/10



Super Mario is one of Nintendo's most popular properties and many games have taken their cue from it. Of those on XBLIG, *Wacky Karts* is perhaps the most true to its 16-bit inspiration: graphically, it would have been perfectly at home on the SNES.

The same isn't quite true of the gameplay though: there only appears to be one power-up – a speed boost – and it's also lacking the elastic-band mechanism, which helps to keep races interesting. Though equally, this could be seen as making the race fairer!

19

Clone Of: Zoop



Game About A Soup Factory

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Action/Puzzle
Authenticity Rating: 9/10



Zoop never really got the attention that it perhaps deserved. In hindsight, marketing it as "America's Largest Killer of Time!" probably wasn't the best way to publicise an action-puzzle title. Still, someone was paying attention, as now we have the oddly-titled *Game About A Soup Factory*, which is a pretty faithful reproduction of *Zoop*, even if it is entirely rendered in monochrome, and comes with an abstract and fully dynamic soundtrack.

18

Clone Of: Oh Mummy



Relic Raider

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Arcade/Maze
Authenticity Rating: 9/10



Often included as a pack-in title on both the ZX Spectrum and Amstrad CPC, *Oh Mummy* took more than a little inspiration from *Pac-Man* and *Amidar*. The aim in each level is to search the tombs (by walking completely around them), while avoiding the mummies; once you've found the sarcophagus and a key, you can head to the exit and escape. As remakes go, *Relic Raider* is pretty faithful: there are traps, new enemies to contend with and the mazes are more complex, but it's still all about avoiding the undead…

17

Clone Of: Tron



Squirm

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Arcade
Authenticity Rating: 10/10



In the beginning, there was *Snake*, and after a few years of roaming around on its lonesome, Bally Midway added some handlebars and a multiplayer mode, thereby giving thousands of children a chance to imagine they were blasting through cyberspace on one of *Tron*'s lightcycles.

Of all the lightcycle games on XBLIG, *Squirm* is probably the most authentic: not only does it retain the traditional right-angled turning mechanism, but it also uses blocky 8-bit graphics with a scanline effect laid on top. Well worth taking out for a ride!

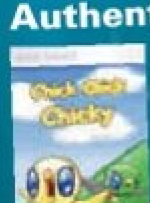
16

Clone Of: Pac-Man



Chick Chick Chicky

Price: 240 Points **Genre:** Arcade/Maze
Authenticity Rating: 8/10



There are not that many *Pac-Man* clones on XBLIG. Of those that are available, *Chick Chick Chicky* is perhaps the most authentic, with its single-screen mazes with "wrap-around" exits, which allow you to jump from one side of the screen to the other. It's also very child-friendly to boot, with its cutesy graphics and relatively undemanding gameplay. However, if you are buying it in an attempt to distract a younger gamer, it might be worth investing in a pair of earplugs, as the soundtrack is more than a little twee!

15

Clone Of: Metal Slug



Veks And Silence

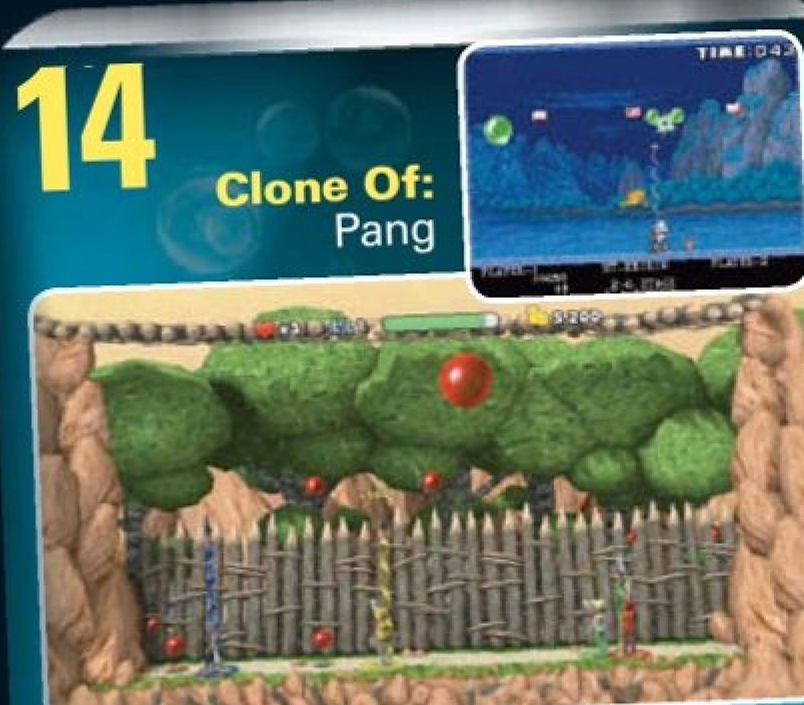
Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Run-And-Gun
Authenticity Rating: 7/10



The run-n-gun genre had its heyday in the Nineties, with games such as *Contra*, *Gunstar Heroes* and *Midnight Resistance* leading the assault – though even now, the *Metal Slug* series continues to wave the banner for peace through superior firepower. And SNK's efforts haven't gone unnoticed, as now we have *Veks And Silence*, a trailer-trash take on the genre, with exploding zombies, ridiculously big guns and a protagonist who keeps a paper bag on his head. Better yet, while the gameplay may be in 2D, the game is rendered in highly detailed 3D.

14

Clone Of: Pang



Avatar Panic!

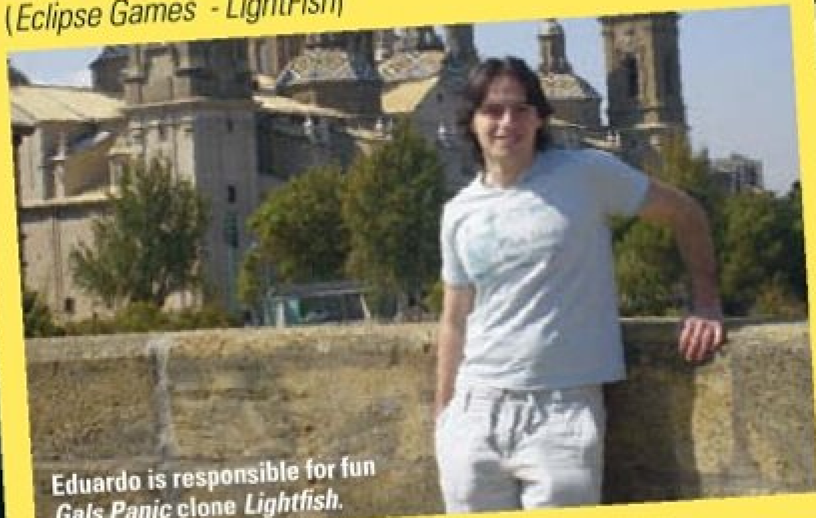
Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Arcade
Authenticity Rating: 10/10



Interestingly, Capcom's *Pang* is itself a clone/remake of an earlier title – HudsonSoft's *Bubble Buster* – which was originally released on the MSX and ZX Spectrum six years earlier. Though to be fair, *Bubble Buster* was more of a proof-of-concept than an actual game, whereas *Pang* went the full ten yards, starting with its attractive cartoon graphics and continuing with new features such as multiplayer support, power-ups, platforms and destructible tiles. In any case, *Avatar* Panic is pretty much just *Pang* with a fresh coat of HD.

Eduardo Jimenez

(*Eclipse Games - LightFish*)



Eduardo is responsible for fun *Gals Panic* clone *Lightfish*.

What made you decide to remake *Gals Panic*?
I loved the game as a kid, and it's the kind of game that hasn't been remade much. It's kind of 'original' to use that mechanic for a game rather than using other more typical puzzle, arcade or platform mechanics. I think that if I loved the game when I was a kid, people would like it now too.

Have you made any other remakes?
Well, *EcoFish* is a mobile version of the same concept and it's out for iOS and Windows Phone 7. Also, you could argue that our first game, *Toy Cars*, is a remake of *Micro Machines*. However, neither of these games are just 'remakes' but they take some of the original core gameplay mechanics and adapt them to current devices and controls.

Were there any issues?
Yeah, getting the game to feel right with the controller was a bit tricky. But then again the controls don't differ so much from the originals in the arcade machines, so I don't think it was such a big deal.

13

Clone Of: Gals Panic



LightFish

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Arcade
Authenticity Rating: 8/10



Qix may have been first, but when it comes to line-drawing games, it's the *Gals Panic* series which most people tend to remember, thanks to the pictures of scantily clad ladies as a reward for completing levels. Generally, *LightFish* is closer to *Gals Panic* than *Qix*: there are power-ups, multiple enemy types and blocks which need to be routed around. It's also much slower-paced and you only have a single line-drawing speed. However, these changes to the formula don't make *LightFish* less enjoyable than *Qix*, just slightly different.

12

Clone Of: Death Tank



Battle Havoc

Price: 400 Points **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up
Authenticity Rating: 9/10



In 1996, *Death Tank* and *Death Tank Zwei* turned up as an easter egg on several Sega Saturn games. And with up to seven people battling in real time, and some impressively overpowered weaponry (such as the appropriately named Death's Head), the *Death Tank* series brought a whole new nuclear-tipped meaning to the word overkill. *Battle Havoc* may not have destructible terrain or *Death Tank Zwei*'s thrash-metal soundtrack, but it does have multiplayer support for up to eight players and the same mindless violence!

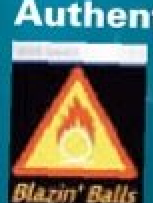
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Clone Of: Trailblazer



Blazing Balls

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Arcade/Racing
Authenticity Rating: 7/10

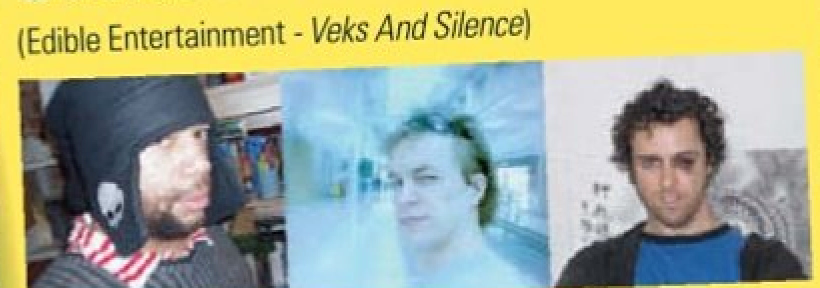


The original *Trailblazer* was a simple and distinctly addictive experience: you steered a ball down a straight road filled with coloured tiles which affected the speed and/or controls of your ball when touched: good memory and better reflexes were needed to survive.

Surprisingly, there aren't many remakes of *Trailblazer* (barring *Jump n Roll* on the Amiga), but *Blazing Balls* has had a go at it while adding a few tweaks to the formula, such as the ability to control your speed and collect coins.

James Anderson

(Edible Entertainment - *Veks And Silence*)



From left to right: James Anderson: Lead artist and game designer, **Jan Krejcir:** Lead animator and 3D modelling, **Chris Morvant:** Lead programmer

What made you decide to remake *Metal Slug*?
Although *Veks And Silence* is heavily influenced by games like *Metal Slug*, we think of it as an homage to great 2D side scrollers like *Metal Slug*, *Splatterhouse* and the *Contra* series. I loved these games when I was younger and I thought it would be great to make something similar as our first game as a company.

Do you still play the original *Metal Slug*?
I still love the original *Metal Slug* and I think that the gameplay is still very fun today. I have the PSP version and I do occasionally pick it up from time to time.

Was it difficult capturing the feel of the original?
Having played these sort of games so much, the concepts that made the games great were pretty clear to us. We hope that we captured the spirit and zany appeal of running and gunning through hordes of crazy enemies with all types of weapons!

Is there anything else you'd like to add to the game as it stands?
If we could add anything more to the game it would be multiplayer co-op play. If or when we return to the series that will be something that we look into so that you can experience the game with your friends.

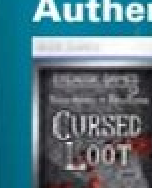
8

Clone Of: Rogue



Cursed Loot

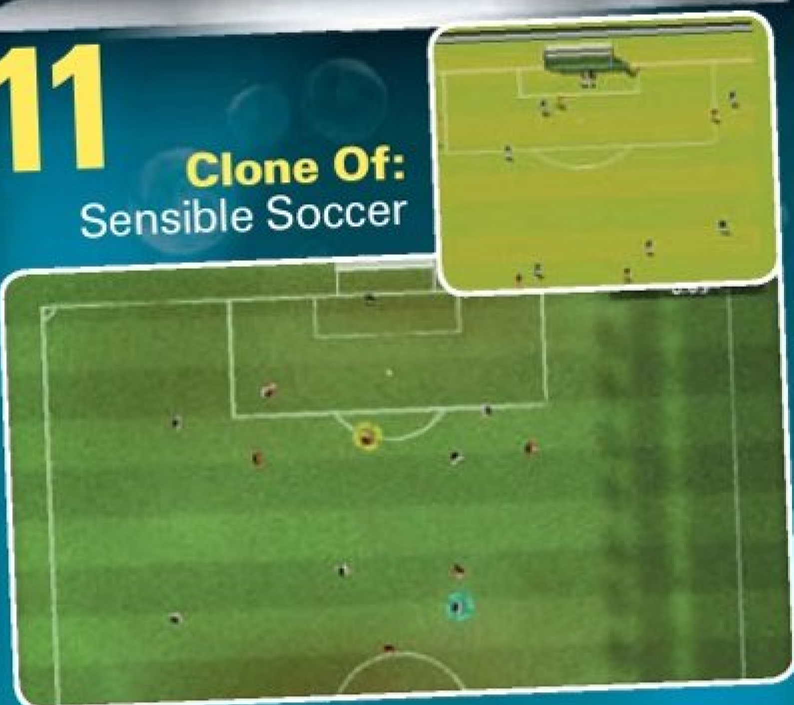
Price: 80 Points **Genre:** RPG
Authenticity Rating: 9/10



Developed on university mainframes and designed for text-only VT100 terminals, *Rogue* continues to have an influence on game design. Over on XBLIG, *Cursed Loot* may have opted for NES-style graphics and a realtime movement system, but the key elements are there: the dungeons are randomly generated, there are mini-quests, death is permanent and unless you have a magic Identify scroll handy, the only way to find out what an item does is to try and use it. Which can be risky – the game's called *Cursed Loot* for a reason…

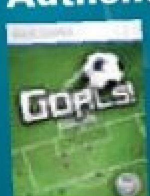
11

Clone Of: Sensible Soccer



Goals!

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Sport
Authenticity Rating: 7/10



There's been many attempts to emulate the noble art of kicking a pig's bladder, but few have ever captured the hearts and minds of gamers in quite the same way as *Sensible Soccer*. *Goals!* has therefore set a high bar for itself in attempting to clone it – and is missing some things, such as the ability to change team formations – but thankfully manages to do a good job when it comes to gameplay: the action is fast-paced and flowing, the controls are easy to master and well laid out and the player-switching system works in a timely fashion.

10

Clone Of: Defender



Orbitron: Revolution

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up
Authenticity Rating: 8/10



There have been quite a few clones and remakes of *Defender* over the years – including the ill-fated *Defender 2000* on the Jaguar – but *Orbitron: Revolution* has to be one of the prettiest. And there are some new aids: not only is there a verbal warning when the aliens attack a weak spot on the station, but there are super-boost gates which can be flown through to speed your ship to the point of attack. You can't shoot while coasting backwards, a tactic which could often be vital in the unforgiving battles. But when you're super-boosting, who cares?

Jason Zielinski

(Coltran Studios - *The Hearts of Men: Throne of Deceit*)



From left to right: Jason Zielinski (Creative director and vampire overlord)
Simon Jager (Lead developer and zombie hunter)

What made you decide to remake *Gauntlet*?
The idea that really was enticing about this game was the social aspect of playing with friends. We felt we could bring a classic game type to this new age, and touch up a few mechanics as well, allowing new and old gamers alike to experience the fun to be had pummelling through mazes with masses of enemies coming at you.

Do you still play the original *Gauntlet*?
I always pick up the controller and play the original when I visit friends, it's just a game that you jump into and immediately can run with.

Was it difficult capturing the feel of the original?
While we tried to capture elements of the classic, we quickly outgrew the original mechanics. We therefore added to the formula with RPG elements such as upgradeable weapons and armour, and the ability to dash. We kept a lot of enemies coming at players, and maze structures, so overall it just came out to be a blend of the past and present.

Are there any other classic games you'd like to remake?
If we were to do anything more classical in nature, it would be a brawler like *Final Fight*, *TMNT*, and *X-Men*.

Michael Muir

(*Eyehook Games - Cursed Loot*)

EYEHOOK GAMES

What made you decide to remake *Rogue*?
I wanted to make a game that I would enjoy both making and playing, and roguelikes have a lot of the qualities that I find enjoyable in games. Specifically, I enjoy the random nature of roguelikes. I also felt like I could add to the genre while staying true to its roots. For example, *Cursed Loot* adds character classes with a level and skill tree system that is quite flexible and encourages experimentation.

Also, the addition of random text-based "Encounters" has been an extremely popular feature in *Cursed Loot*. Finally, *Cursed Loot* is in real time, making it much more tactical than a traditional roguelike. But, of course, you still only get one life!

Have you created any other remakes?
I actually just released *Snakester* for Xbox Indie Games. It's a modern update to classic snake, which throws away the grid and gives you full analog control of the snake. Beyond that, it includes a co-op mode in which you and a friend control a two-headed snake simultaneously. It's quite challenging, but a lot of fun.

Is there anything else you'd like to add to the game; did you plan for expansions?
In its various forms, *Cursed Loot* has seen several content updates, and, of course, there's always more that I'd like to add. *Cursed Loot* was built with expansion in mind, and (given the time!), I hope that there will be more.

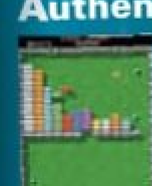
7

Clone Of: Arkanoid



IonBall

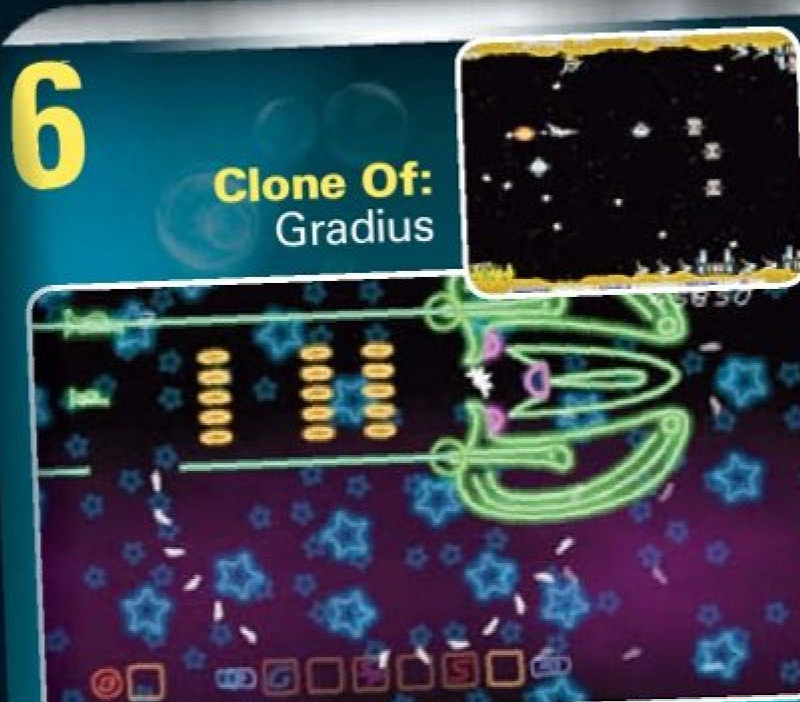
Price: 240 Points **Genre:** Bat & Ball
Authenticity Rating: 9/10



For all that there are dozens of *Arkanoid* clones out there, most of them fail to appreciate that the constantly respawning aliens were an essential element of the game's design; they introduced a random factor which could both help and hinder. Thankfully, a few games break this trend, and *IonBall* is one such title – *and* it also includes another oft-missed element: boss battles. Better yet, it comes with a gloriously detailed baroque-steampunk theme, which would have Charles Babbage weeping tears of joy.

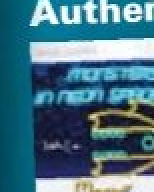
6

Clone Of: Gradius



Monsters In Neon Space

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up
Authenticity Rating: 6/10



There are a few deviations from the original: there are no Options to collect and you can choose between power-ups at any time, rather than having to save up tokens as per the original. Lives are more like shields; dying removes any active power-ups but doesn't send you back to a checkpoint. Still, the boss battles are nicely varied, the glowy graphics are charming, and for all that it starts off relatively sedately, it doesn't stay that way for long!

5

Clone Of: Robotron





Ultratron

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up
Authenticity Rating: 7/10



Berzerk may have been first, but it was *Robotron* which popularised the arena-shooter, thanks in part to its twin-stick controls – though at the same time, this also limited the home market, as game developers couldn't count on gamers owning two joysticks.

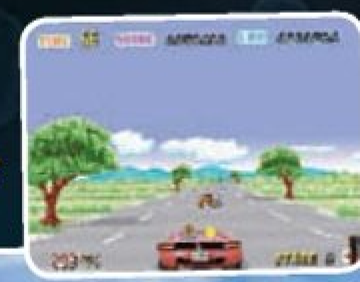
These days, with joysticks aplenty, there are over two-hundred arena shooters on XBLIG. Admittedly, most have been inspired by *Geometry Wars* and far too many involve zombies, but *Ultratron* is an exception. As the name suggests, it's very much based on *Robotron*, with its retro-styled robot theme, the level-based gameplay and the comparatively varied enemies and AI behaviour. And naturally, it uses low-resolution sprites and backdrops, though these are combined with high-resolution lighting effects.

However, the gameplay isn't a carbon copy of *Robotron*'s: the last human family is conspicuous by their absence, the action is slower paced, and there are some more modern elements added to the gameplay, such as collectible power-ups, special bonus levels and boss battles. In fact, *Ultratron* can almost be seen as *Robotron*'s evil twin – it's dark, moody and fond of listening to industrial drone tunes. But at the same time, underneath its nihilistic exterior, *Ultratron* is first and foremost about the twin-stick robot carnage!



4

Clone Of: OutRun





Ocean Drive Challenge

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Arcade Racer
Authenticity Rating: 7/10



OutRun is the videogaming equivalent of a feel-good road-trip movie; it may technically be a racing game where you're trying to outrun the clock, but in many ways, the journey is just as important as reaching the end goal. Other vehicles may be constantly zipping past you, but you can still relax and listen to the music, admire the colourful scenery and enjoy the virtual wind in your hair.

From a technical viewpoint, *Ocean Drive Challenge* isn't a great clone of *OutRun*. It doesn't have multiple routes, nor does it have hills or sand-drifts. The physics engine is simplistic: there's no damage model and you can't crash your car – unlike the original, where you could actually flip the car over.

But it does have a jukebox where you can pick a song before starting, three cars to pick from and an oddly appealing monologue system, which lets you listen to the musings of the driver. More importantly, what it does have is the *soul* of *OutRun*. This is high speed driving the way it should be: in a slick car on a hot summer's day with good tunes blasting out the stereo and a cheerfully colourful world unrolling before you as you chase the sun all the way to the horizon.



3

Clone Of: Thrust





Gravitron 360

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up
Authenticity Rating: 9/10



Back in 1982, Atari used state of the art vector technology to produce *Gravitar*, a game which took *Lunar Lander*'s physics model and bolted it onto a full-blown shoot-'em-up where you flew your ship into underground caverns to seek out and destroy enemy bunkers – once these were taken out, you had to flee back into space before a chain reaction reduced the entire planet to rubble. The vectored-thrust controls took some getting used to, but the idea proved popular and games such as *Thrust* on the BBC Micro built on the concept.

Now, there's *Gravitron 360*, which (despite the name) owes more to *Thrust* than it does to *Gravitar*. And it's really good. The vector graphics are gorgeous, the difficulty scales nicely and while there have been some gameplay tweaks, they're well thought out and balanced – for instance, instead of grappling onto a pod and then having to fight its penduluming weight as you manoeuvre around the caverns, you instead land to pick up scientists. Which isn't as easy as it sounds, as they can often be found loitering on freely rotating pieces of the landscape, forcing you to match the rotational speed and angle before you can land. All told, *Gravitron 360* is a perfect example of how to modernise a game without breaking its core gameplay. More, please!



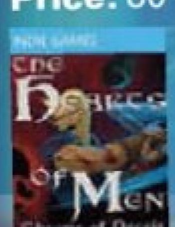
2 Clone Of: Gauntlet





The Hearts of Men: Throne Of Deceit

Price: 80 Points **Genre:** Arcade/Adventure **Authenticity Rating:** 8/10



The original *Gauntlet* is still a surprisingly good multiplayer experience, thanks in no small part to the fact that up to four players could play both competitively and cooperatively: you could work together to take out enemy generators or race each other to the next health/mana pick up. And while the gameplay of *The Hearts of Men: Throne Of Deceit* may have some more modern RPG-lite gameplay elements, it's still at heart all about picking a fantasy archetype, grabbing keys, throwing pointy things at the undead, destroying enemy generators and arguing over who gets to eat the roast beef. Better yet, up to *eight* people can play!

Graphically, *TOD* is pretty nice – there are quite a lot of glowy special effects, but the graphics are generally clear and it's easy to tell who's who. And as hinted above, there have been a few additions to the core *Gauntlet* gameplay. You upgrade your character between zones, and level designs are considerably more varied than the original, both from the visual and gameplay perspectives – there are traps and set-pieces to overcome as you work your way through the hordes of enemies.

There are even some bonus features thrown in with the game. Not only is there a simple arena-shoot-'em-up mode, but as with some of Atari's 2600 releases, it comes complete with a 28-page comic which really helps set the scene for the game.







1 Clone Of: Pong





Jackpot Stadium

Price: 240 Points **Genre:** Arcade/Bat & Ball **Authenticity Rating:** 8/10



Perhaps unsurprisingly, *Pong* is one of the most heavily cloned games on XBLIG – after all, it's an iconic videogame and one of the easiest to implement. This also makes it a good platform for experimentation and in between the minimalist variations on the original theme, there's been a wealth of interesting, weird and even disturbing takes on the classic tale of bat meeting ball – anyone up for poking an eye across the screen with a disembodied finger?

However, of all these mutations and reinventions, *Jackpot Stadium* is perhaps one of the better ones. Partly this is because it drags *Pong* into the 21st Century with some impressively blinged-up visuals. The entire affair is rendered in 3D with lots of shiny special effects, urban-graffiti-style artwork and an overarching pinball theme, which even includes a "dot-matrix" scoreboard, which has a real-time rendering of the playing field as a backdrop. There's also more to the gameplay than the original's right-angled physics model: players can tilt their pads to change the angle of deflection, power-ups can be collected and skilled players can pull off score combos to boost their score and humiliate their opponents.

This is very much *Pong* for the iPhone generation, and while in many ways, it seems odd to spend so much time and effort on sprucing up one of the oldest and simplest videogames going, if you're going to do so, you might as well do it in style!





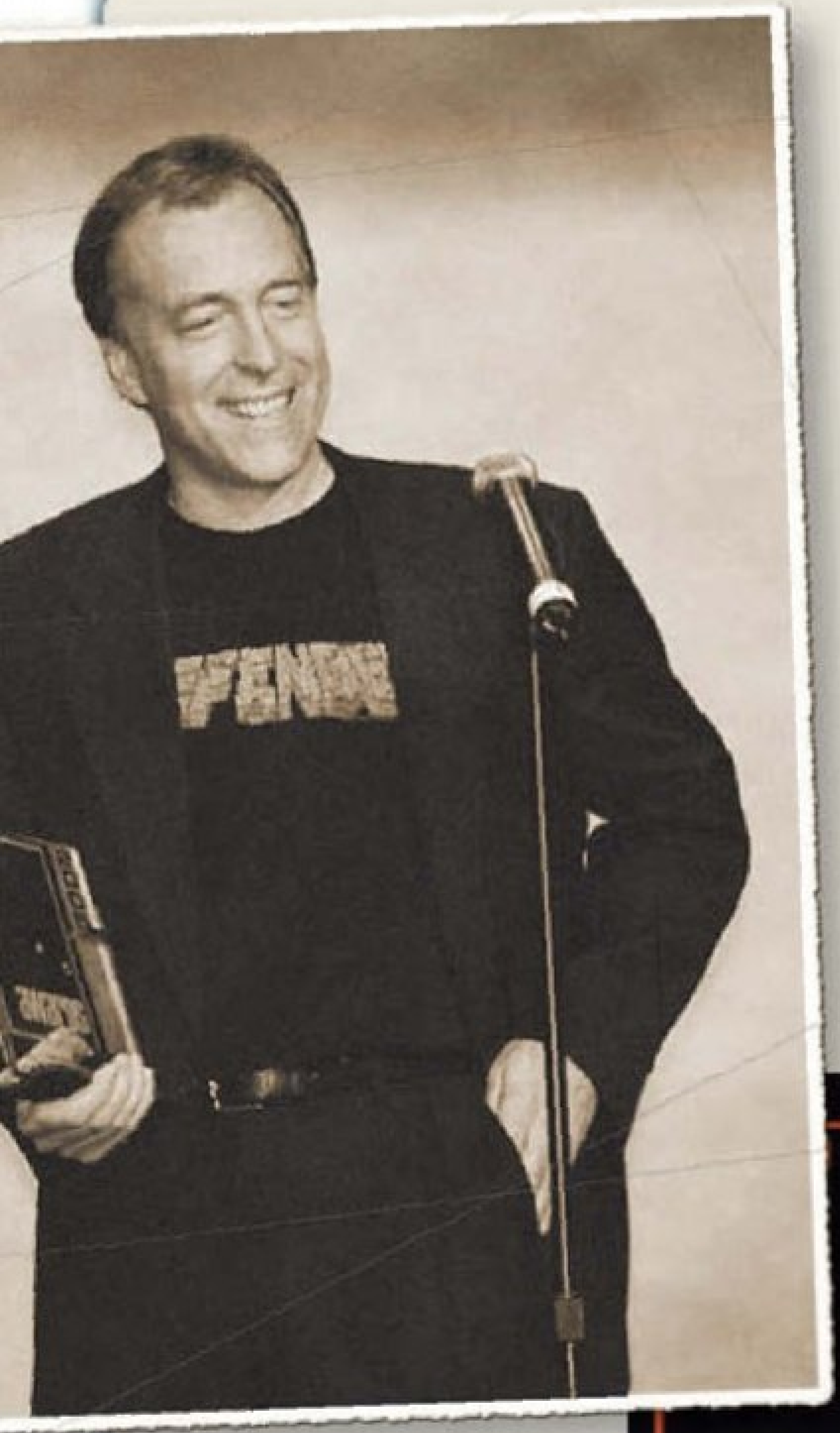


Desert Island Disks Greatest HITS

What cherished games would you take to the island?

Our Desert Island Disks column has been running for 100 issues, so to mark this little milestone, Paul Drury visited the island, rummaged beneath the coconut trees and can now reveal the eight most chosen games





1. Robotron – Coin-op

We weren't surprised to discover this joyful two-stick shooter was our castaways' joint most popular choice. Even the two men who created it simply couldn't face being marooned without it.

Eugene Jarvis [*Robotron; Defender*]: "*Robotron* is full immersion. Every muscle in your body and every brain cell are completely tapped. You break sweat with *Robotron*. The aerobics factor could be useful on the island."

Larry Demar [*Robotron; Stargate*]: "The sheer amount of strategy and tactics haven't been matched in many games over the years. The rush of the frenetic gameplay, the mayhem… I don't know if it's the best ever, but I know it's lasted."

Gary Liddon [*Delta; Zzap!64*]: "I've loved it so much and for so long. I've got a cabinet which I was lucky enough to get off a bloke whose wife was threatening to divorce him if he didn't get rid of it."

Gordon Houghton [*Zzap!64; The One*]: "It was, and still is, the definitive shooter: an insanely frantic kill-or-be-killed game, blessed with fantastic sound effects and outstanding graphics. Eugene Jarvis is a genius."



2. Tetris – Game Boy

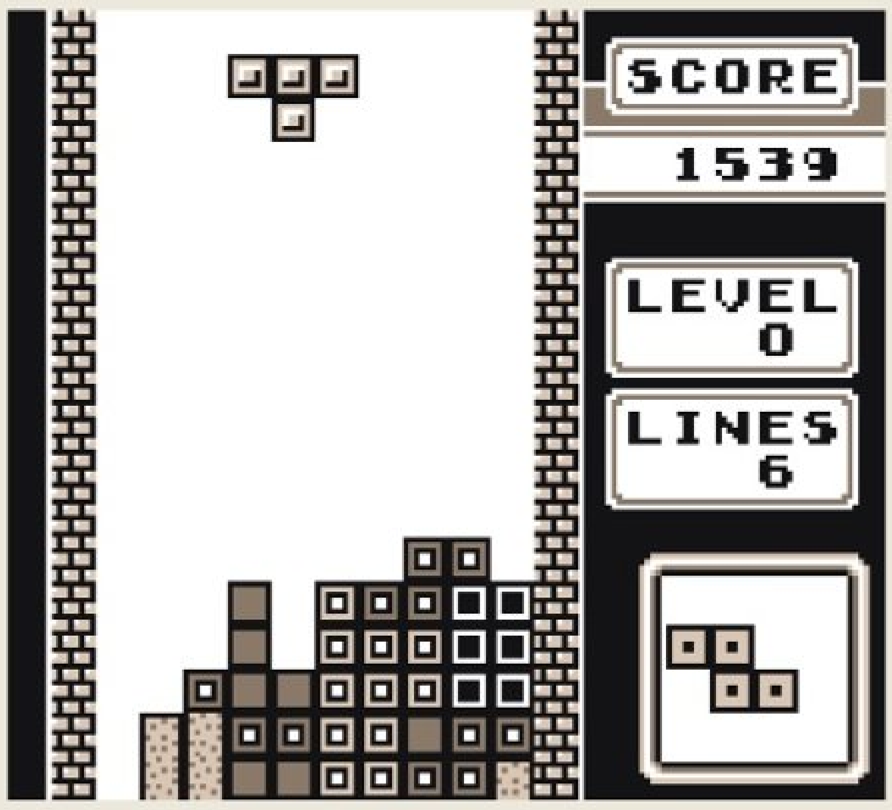
Sharing the top spot is the quintessential puzzle game. With a solar-powered Game Boy, our island may indeed be the ideal spot for some truly marathon games.

Nick Pelling [*Frak!; Firetrack*]: "Pure elegance. If you were sending something on a spacecraft for aliens to pick up, you could send them something prosaic about our culture or you could give them *Tetris* and they'd think, 'Yeah, that's pretty cool.' On an island, I could get old playing *Tetris*."

Matthew Smith [*Manic Miner; Jet Set Willy*]: "I've managed to get two and a half million on *Marathon*. Once I get in the zone it's just a matter of when the batteries run out. I can't really get high scores any more, because I've knackered the down button."

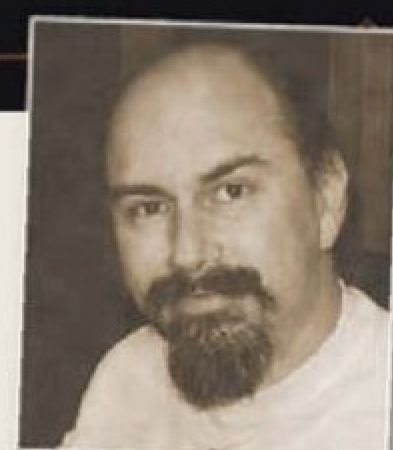
Ally Noble [*Bandersnatch; The Great Escape*] "The repetition, the fact it speeds up gently… I couldn't put it down. I'd still be awake at three in the morning and then have *Tetris* dreams."

Ben Daglish [game musician]: "Because it goes ding, ding-ding-ding, ding-ding-ding, ding-ding-ding… for years!"



3. Defender – Coin-op





Eugene and Larry's second entry in our top eight, the breath-taking speed, screen-filling explosions and those memorable sound effects made the intimidating control set-up worth getting to grips with.

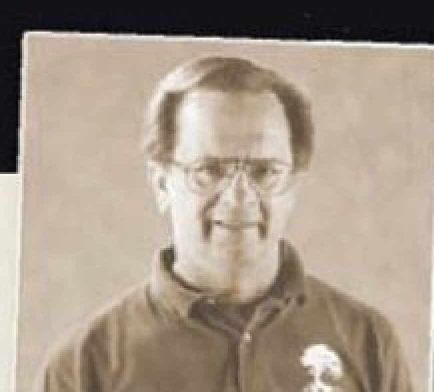
Howard Scott Warshaw [*Yars' Revenge; ET*]: "This was the first multi-dimensional game. There were more threats and objectives than just cleaning up your plate. There were styles of play. It was the first game to really generate meta-conversations – people would talk about their strategies and approaches."

Andy Walker [*The Pit; Super Pipeline*]: "This absolutely blew me away – just the speed of the thing. Lovely, rich control and the very best explosions money could buy. And remember, people had to buy the right to play. A day's play was expensive but never a waste of money."

Steve Wright [*Pele's Soccer*]: "An arcade classic and I was there during the classic era. With *Defender*, it was the kinematics, the action and the sound effects. Just so exciting."

4. Asteroids – Coin-op





Atari's answer to *Space Invaders*, this just beats its rival. Those clean vector lines and graceful gameplay make this another game chosen by its creator to take to the island.

Ed Logg [*Asteroids*; *Gauntlet*]: "It gave you plenty of choices of how to play – you can lurk, fly around, run away, stay in one place. My wife loved the game and had her own machine before we met. So naturally, she loved the creator…"

Steve Bristow [*Tank; PONG Doubles*]: "The absolute best vector game ever built. I saw it in development, I knew it was good and it was… and it sold like hell! *Asteroids* is a metaphor for life. You solve one problem and it creates other problems."

Owen Rubin [*Major Havoc; Triple Hunt*]: "It's addictive, it's annoying, it's hard and it's a damn lot of fun."

5. Space Invaders – Coin-op





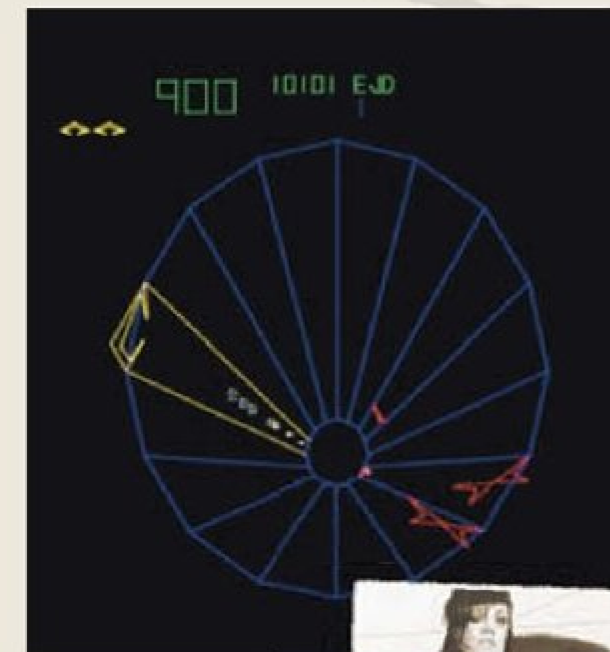
Taito tell the world that Japan means business. The game that truly heralded the start of the Golden Age of arcades (and pop song spin-offs, too).

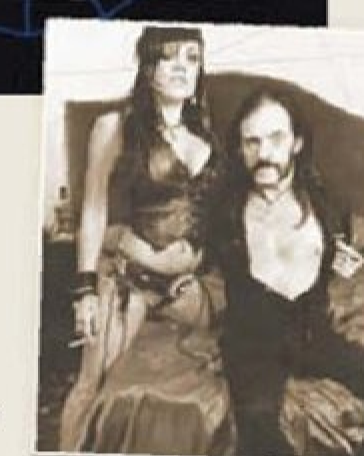
Archer Maclean [*Dropzone*; *IK+*]: "It has to be the Taito machine with the beautiful backdrop. I still find it a challenge to this day. It was one of the earliest games to use emotion – it had that heartbeat."

Ed Rotberg [*Battlezone; STUN Runner*]: "This was the first videogame that I got really, really hooked on. Sweaty hands, dreams about different strategies, agonizing over how I could have avoided losing that last life... It broke ground in so many different areas for a whole generation of videogames."

Kevin Toms [*Football Manager*]: "Me and my mates played it for weeks trying to get past the first screen. We'd get stuck on that last invader! We were desperate to know what happened next. Of course, it was something of an anti-climax…"

6. Tempest – Coin-op





Dave Theurer's stylish blaster pioneered the use of colour vector graphics to create an abstract adrenaline rush.

Lemmy [Hawkwind; Motorhead]: "We used to play it at this club in New York City that opened at 3am. A great game to play when you're drunk."

Steve Woita [*Sonic Spinball; Kid Chameleon*]: "I remember playing it a lot at Chuck-E-Cheese while I was at Apple, playing it with one hand and a slice of pizza in the other. The pizza and the game are just baked into my head."

Tim Skelly [*Warrior, Star Castle*]: "A great game and it doesn't hurt that it's a vector game. Colour vectors at that, which I worked with for a short time at Sega. Just phenomenal."

Tony Crowther [*Loco*; *Captive*]: "I used to rest my hand on a ripped up cigarette packet to stop myself getting blisters from the disk control."

7. The Sims – PC





Will Wright's all-conquering little people are an understandable choice for the island, providing companionship and a never-ending distraction.

Ian Grieve [*Colony Wars*]: "I got so into it that I created my life in *The Sims*; same house, a wife just like my own, even a little baby like our real life daughter. One day I was busy with a bunch of stuff and couldn't keep up with all the Sims' demands. Social services came and took the baby away in the game."

John Newcomer [*Joust; Sinistar*]: "I need someone to talk to on the island! It would help me stay sane. Actually, it would probably make me go insane, talking to these little characters, giving them names and lives, playing with a society, even though it's a weird computer one…"

Jamie Fenton [*GORF; Robby Roto*]: "A game close to my heart. I can try out male characters and female characters – it's fun!"

8. Missile Command – Coin-op





The final spot goes to another Dave Theurer game. A nuclear nightmare re-imagined as an utterly compelling coin-op, the game over screen would have particular poignancy far from home.

Rob Fulop [*Missile Command (VCS)*; *Demon Attack*]: "The beautiful thing about the game, the thing that brings me back, is that one doesn't have to be accurate when firing off the missiles. Getting close is good enough, because the expanding explosion of your ICBMs destroy any oncoming missiles nearby. I love that!"

Bob Polaro [*Defender (VCS)*; *RealSports Volleyball*]: "I still consider this my favourite game of all time. When you put up that spread of explosions, that frenzy, that wave after wave structure… nothing compares to it."

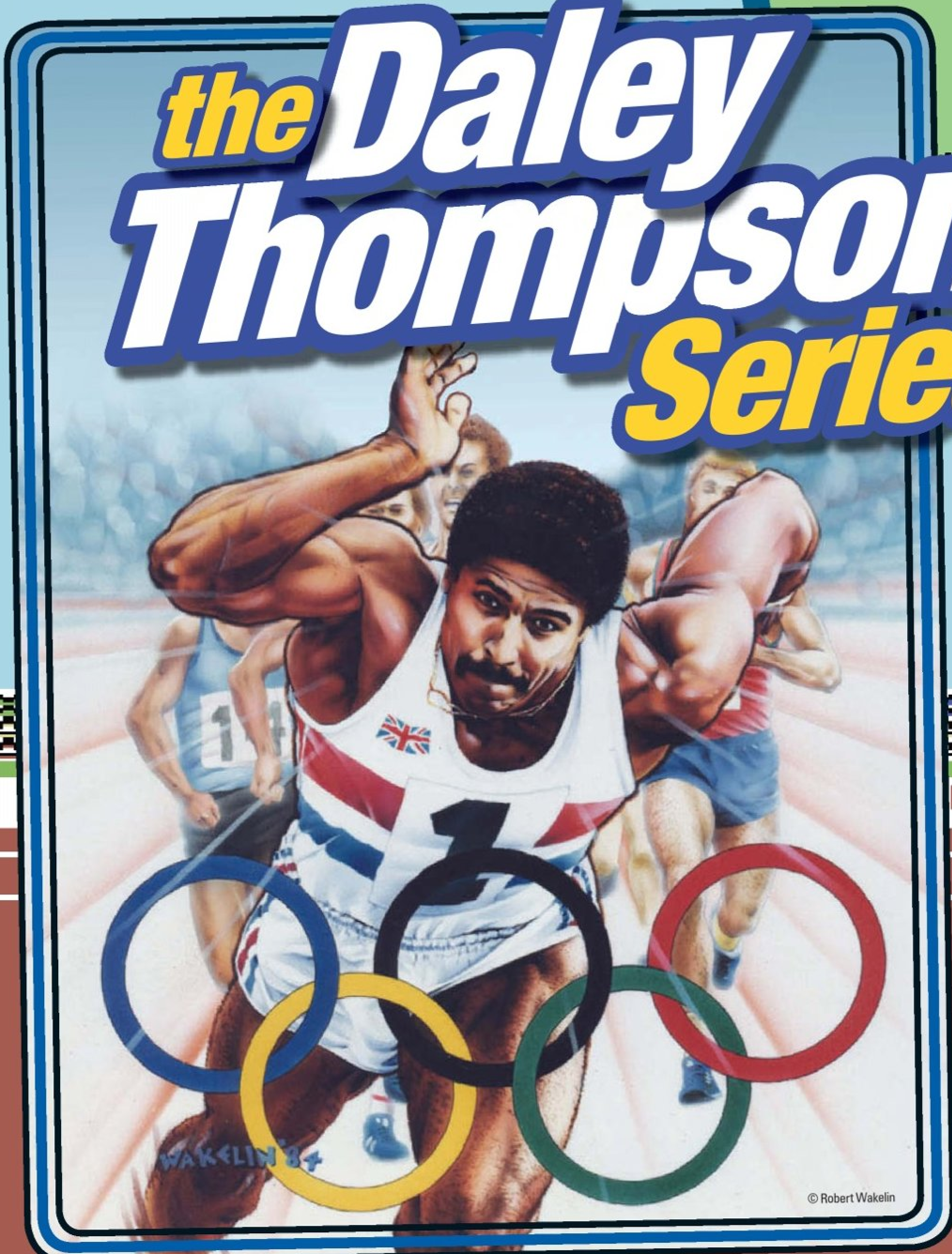
Eric Ginner [*Trevor McFur; Gubble*]: "That huge trackball was pretty wild at the time. As a bonus, it makes a great light source. Some of those background colours are blinding!"

This feature is dedicated to the one castaway that is no longer with us. RIP Keith Campbell.

THE MAKING OF

the Daley Thompson Series



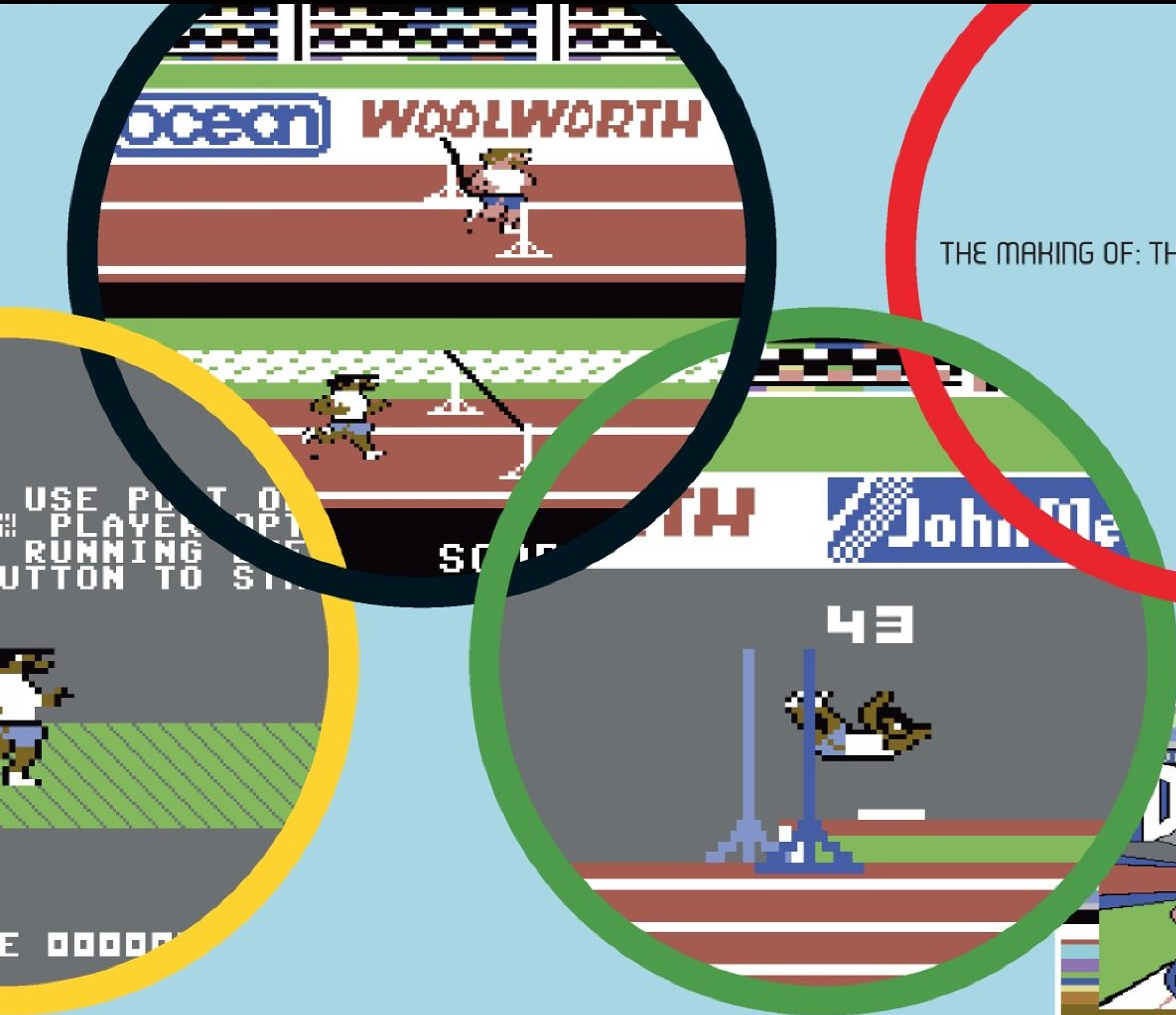


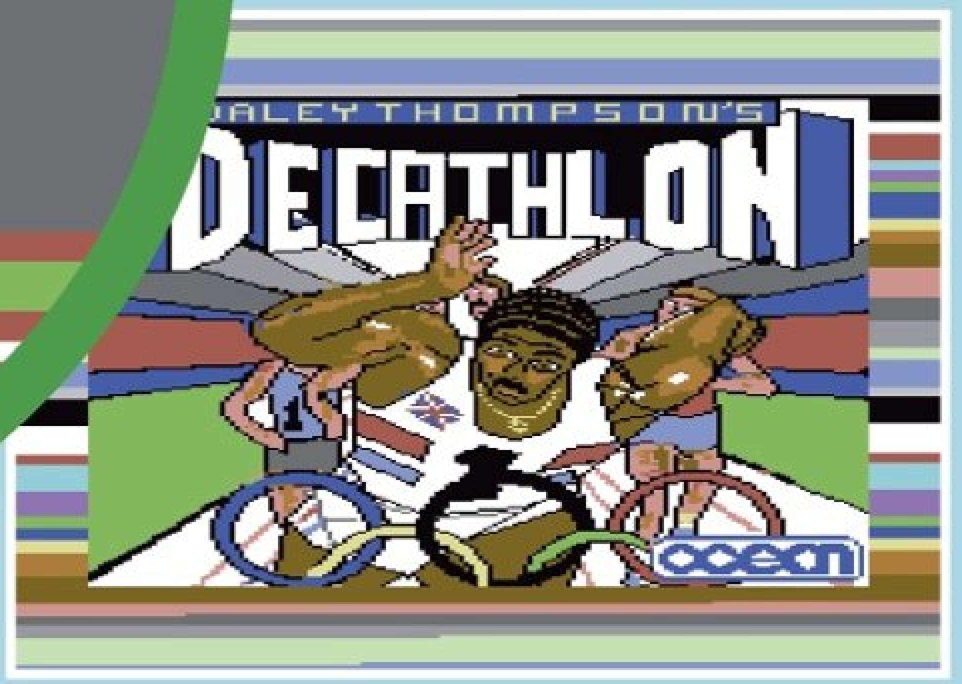
© Robert Wakelin

Francis Morgan Ayodélé Thompson became a household name in the Eighties after his performances in several gruelling decathlons. Daley Thompson's Decathlon was the first of five games named after him. Andrew Fisher looks back with the people who created them

Back in 1984, very few games had celebrity endorsement – Activision's *Decathlon* launched the year before without it. Ocean changed that. "I saw *Track & Field* by Konami, on holiday. I convinced Jon Woods that it was a game that we should do," says C64 programmer Dave Collier. "It was Jon's idea to tie in with the Olympics at the time. Apparently Daley Thompson was some distant relative of Christian Urquhart." The arcade game required the player to bash buttons, which translated to "waggling the joystick" left and right for home users. "Joystick manufacturers loved us. Tony Pomfret was really good at this," remembers Collier. There was subtlety in the method, requiring the player to build up and maintain a rhythm to achieve the best scores.

Gary Bracey joined Ocean as Software Manager after *Decathlon*. "Ocean deserves a little more credit for pioneering practices that have become more widely adopted today. *Daley Thompson* was the first high profile





» [C64] The loading screen, accompanied by Martin Galway's version of *Rydeen*.



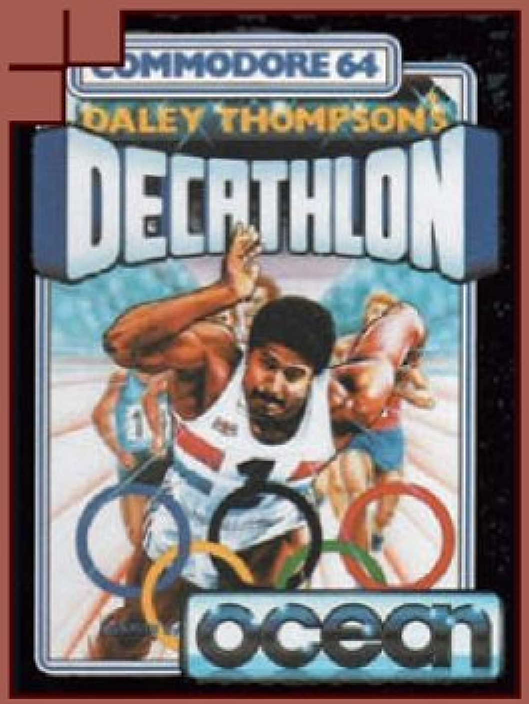
licence (to the best of my knowledge) to feature a sporting star rather than a team or association. We were also the first to do co-op marketing with movie/video companies. It's only when the genre became mainstream that they were accepted as a legitimate entertainment medium. I genuinely believe Ocean was a key contributor to establishing that profile via marketing and licensing." As for waggling, Bracey remarks, "I played the *Epyx* games quite a lot. I wasn't a huge fan of the 'joystick wagglers'."

> "I wasn't a huge fan of the 'joystick wagglers'" Gary Bracey

Split-screen scrolling allowed two C64 players to compete simultaneously in running events. "That technique was discovered by Tony Pomfret, via the hacker scene," Dave Collier reveals. In the background of the events were advertising boards, at a time when the issue of amateur status for athletes was under discussion. Ocean donated part of the profits from the Daley games to the British Amateur Athletics Association. "It was my idea to include advertising and I loved it," says Collier. Unfortunately, Spectrum players were faced with a white Daley, due to colour limitations. Despite being for 48K only, the game was split into two completely separate parts, mirroring the two days of the decathlon competition. *Daley Thompson's Star Events*, produced by D.C. Ward and the in-house team for the C16 and Plus/4, was also split into two separate parts.

Manchester-based Martin Galway took his demo of BBC music to Ocean. "David Collier, who hadn't known me more than 30 minutes, lent me an entire C64 development system with no contract in place. I got home and set to work. After doing three games as a freelancer, I joined full time in January 1985." In that demonstration was a cover of *Rydeen* by the Yellow Magic Orchestra, although Galway was unaware it was a cover. "I walked into Pleasure Pastimes, an amusement arcade on Oxford Road around 1983. *Super Locomotive* was there, and it had the best music I'd ever heard in any arcade game! I was so into this music, I took a portable cassette deck into town on the bus one day so I could record the cabinet while it played." Galway's school friend Chris Roberts used the BBC version for *Stryker's Run*, published by Superior Software.

Galway visited Ocean again in August 1984. "Daley Thompson was ruling the decathlon event for the second Olympics in a row and getting tons of national attention, so Ocean's staff were understandably all ecstatic about the company's deal with him and drooling that they'd have a big hit. The developers were all sitting topless, sweating in rooms with no air conditioning – the office windows were all wide open to help bring in some cool air, but it was still boiling in there. During this visit, Dave Collier said they were doing mastering work and he needed loading music *today*. He handed me the



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** OCEAN SOFTWARE
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** DECATHLON 1984, SUPER-TEST 1985, STAR EVENTS 1985, OLYMPIC CHALLENGE 1988
- » **PLATFORM:** VARIOUS
- » **GENRE:** SPORTS SIMULATION

THE MAKING OF

> “It turns out I sent in my demo just as Martin Galway was preparing to leave the company” Jonathan Dunn



» [Spectrum] White men can't jump. The official measures a poor attempt in the long jump.



» [C16] *Star Events* featured just seven different disciplines, including the long jump, javelin and shot put.

scant documentation to David Dunn's music player (one or two roughed-up sheets of dot-matrix-printed paper). All I could do was sit down and hand-code note by note the *Super Locomotive* tune from memory.”

In contrast to the summer heat, Dave Collier remembers the end of the process. “We all had a nasty chest infection and worked on the last event together at Tony's house. I remember chucking up all over his mum's prized begonias. The last memory was Bill Barna and Tony Pomfret taking the final version to the mastering company and spinning out the company car on ice early in the morning.” *Daley Thompson's Decathlon* reached the top of the software charts, appeared on the first *They Sold A Million* compilation and was among the first of the budget re-releases from Ocean label Hit Squad.

With his second Olympic gold, Daley Thompson became BBC Sports Personality of the Year and the face of the energy drink Lucozade. Ocean gained the licence to convert Konami's new game *Hypersports* to home computers. The BBC TV programme *Superstars*, pitting sports stars against each other in a series of events, inspired *Daley Thompson's Super Test*. Martech had produced an official tie-in using judo star Brian Jacks, while Ocean's effort featured similar events including penalty shoot-out, pistol shooting and rowing.

Working on the Spectrum version of *Super Test* was the late Joffa Smith, who wrote about the game on his website. “I hated this project. I produced four events – Rowing, Ski-Jump, Tug O' War and the Triple Jump – and also the Main Menu, User Name Input and Game Over screens. I designed a few graphics, like the judges in the Diving. We had to produce the game very quickly so all the elements I worked on were modified *Hypersports* code, with the exception of the ski-jump. I'd originally planned to take a holiday once my 48k code was completed, but Ocean decided they needed to beef up the 128k version with four more events. I'd been working flat out for quite some time and really needed a break. I ended up programming the Triple Jump event during my holiday! I must point out that it was my

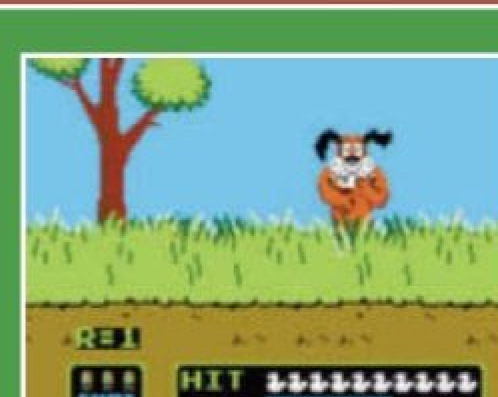


THE RG OLYMPICS

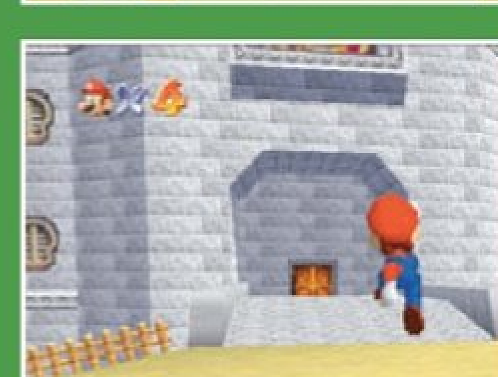
To complement the Decathlon, we take you over to our commentator Retro Gutteridge for ten events that will challenge our competitors to the limit



FENCING - BARBARIAN (C64)
“No trouble recognising a scoring hit in this event, as the splash of blood and the snarling snakes will tell you. Unfortunately the flying neck chop could eliminate some weaker contenders in the early rounds, before they have to deal with Drax to earn the freedom of Princess Mariana (Maria Whittaker).”



SHOOTING - DUCK HUNT (NES)
“Real pigeons were killed at the Paris Olympics, now each country has to find their own sniggering dog to team up with the best hunter. Also features more conventional skeet (clay pigeon) shooting for when you are bored of multicoloured ducks.”



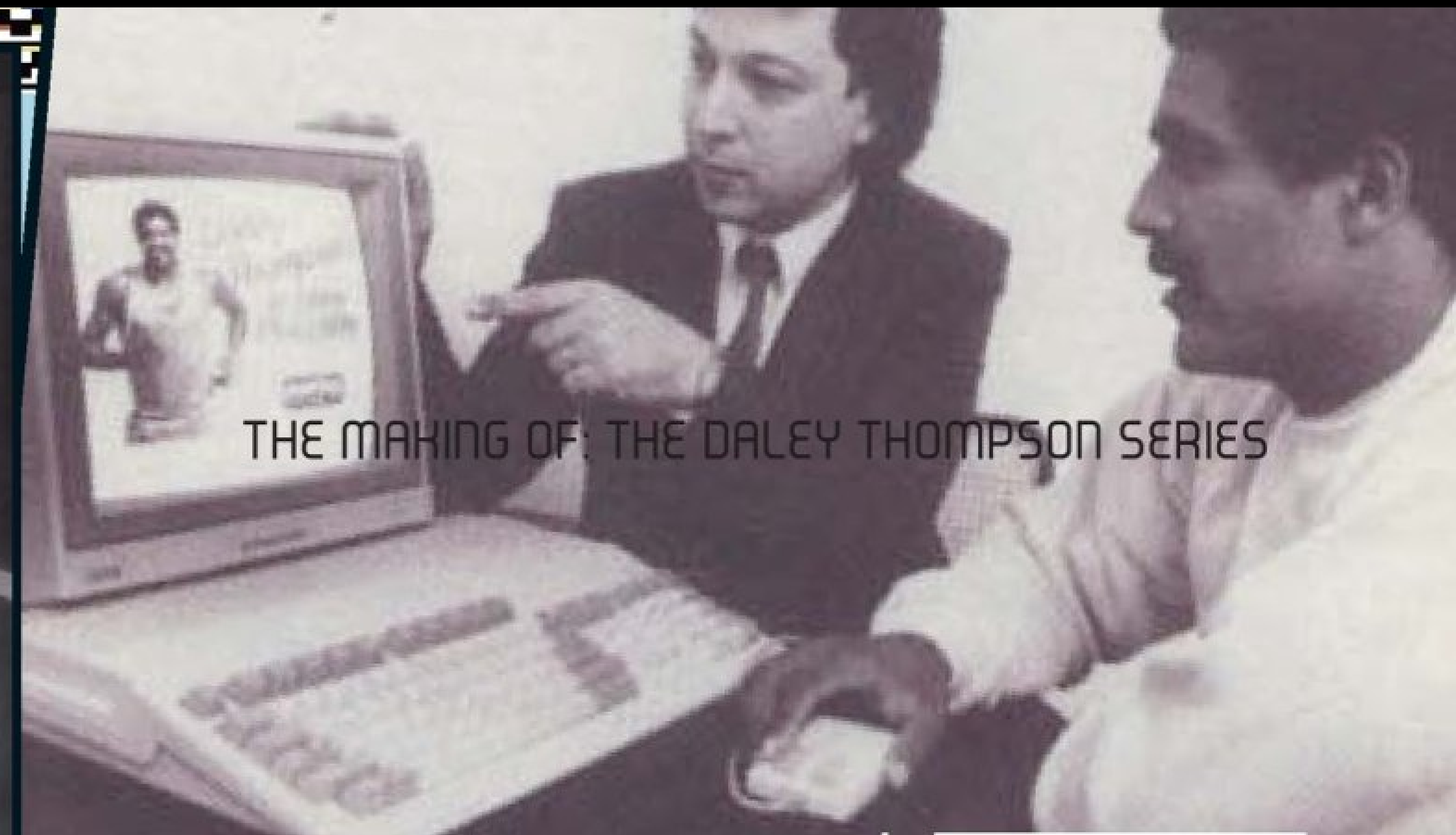
GYMNASTICS - SUPER MARIO 64 (N64)
“Who would have thought a fat, middle-aged Italian plumber in red dungarees would dominate this event? With his backflips, wall jumps and long skids, who needs a springboard when you can fly into the air off the shell of a Koopa?”



CYCLING - UNIRALLY (SNES)
“We're ditching one wheel for DMA Design's superb SNES title, known as *Uniracers* in the States. The head-to-head two-player mode around jump-filled courses often results in the closest of split-second finishes. And the animated unicycles display a remarkable amount of character.”



» Commodore produced a bundle containing the Commodore C64 and *Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge.*


» Gary Bracey meeting Daley to show off work on *Olympic Challenge.*

decision to do this extra work and wasn't bullied into it, as some people/websites seem to believe!"

Showing off the game at a trade fair was complicated, Smith recalls. "The game wasn't quite ready in time for the 1985 ECTS show in London, where it was to be showcased on the Sinclair stand as one of the first 128K games. Ocean employees spent the night before the opening manually sticking labels onto sample copies of the game and boxing them up. It was a valiant attempt to make it look like the product had actually been finished. It was my job to keep visiting the Sinclair stand and, due to a last minute bug that caused the game to endlessly play the Giant Slalom event, 'sneakily' reset all the machines on display."

Super Test on the C64 re-used Martin Galway's music from *Hypersports*, including his rendition of the *Chariots Of Fire* theme by Vangelis. "I was slammed with a whole bunch of games to work on. I don't think I would have been very happy about it, but was not in a position to solve the problem any other way!" Asked how long the tune took prompts Galway to remember a licensing issue. "It took an afternoon, possibly in May or so of 1985. It was done completely from memory, [which] explains some of the arrangement gaffs in it. I got halfway through it when we realised we should probably tell the boss! So, David Collier brought Jon Woods in and I hit the space bar. Before it had even got to the end, he had a sort of "troubles ahead" look on his face and walked out. Jon came back five minutes later and said he had "got the rights". Now I am not sure if he'd actually made a call to anyone, or if he just hung in the doorway of David Ward's office and had a chat, but our minds were at ease and I finished the piece."

In 1988 Daley Thompson set out to compete in his third Olympics and Ocean started work on *Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge*, as Gary Bracey recalls. "The combo of an already-established franchise with the biggest global sporting event was obviously a great opportunity. We really wanted to forge some new development frontiers within that particular genre, rather than just re-hashing what had gone before. It was quite an ambitious project." Daley's association with Lucozade and Adidas trainers made it into the game, with players having to choose the right footwear before each event as copy protection.

Jonathan Dunn created music and sound effects for *Olympic Challenge*, having joined the in-house team in October 1987. "I was studying music at college, and started making music on my Commodore 64. Friends of mine encouraged me to send out demos to various software houses, one of which was Ocean. It turns out I sent in my demo just as Martin Galway was preparing to leave the company. I was offered the job that day." In



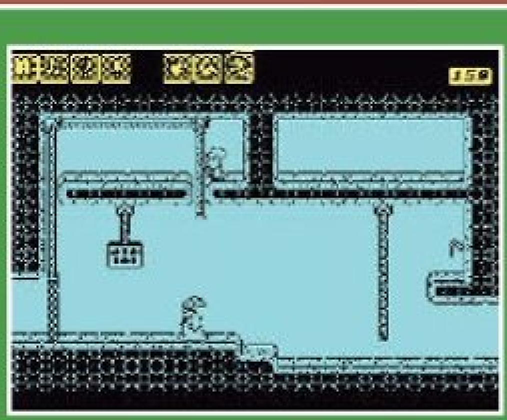
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

HYPERSPORTS
SYSTEM: C64, SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD
YEAR: 1985 (ON THE IMAGINE LABEL)

COMBAT SCHOOL (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: C64, SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD
YEAR: 1987

RUN THE GAUNTLET
SYSTEM: C64, SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD, AMIGA, ATARI ST
YEAR: 1989





TRIATHLON - IMOGEN (BBC)
"Triathletes have to change between swimming, cycling and running. Our retro triathletes have to change shape between wizard, monkey and cat to solve fiendish puzzles and escape the maze of platforms and ropes against the clock in this cute BBC classic by Michael St Aubyn."



OPEN WATER SWIMMING - ECCO THE DOLPHIN (MEGA DRIVE)
"Forget the controversy over hi-tech swimsuits and get back to nature with the best swimmer around. Of course, Olympic athletes do not usually come equipped with sonar or perform dazzling somersaults."



MARATHON - SPACE HARRIER (ARCADE)
"Your hero could race through the Fantasy Zone on foot… If you choose to. Of course, all the obstacles will trip you up or knock you out, and those huge dragons will appear even bigger (and harder to kill) from a ground level perspective."



WRESTLING - KING OF THE MONSTERS 2 (NEO GEO)
"And here is another event that has been spiced up in recent years, thanks to the introduction of giant monsters, lasers and no holds barred rules that see the destruction of entire cities. An event usually dominated by the Japanese for some reason…"

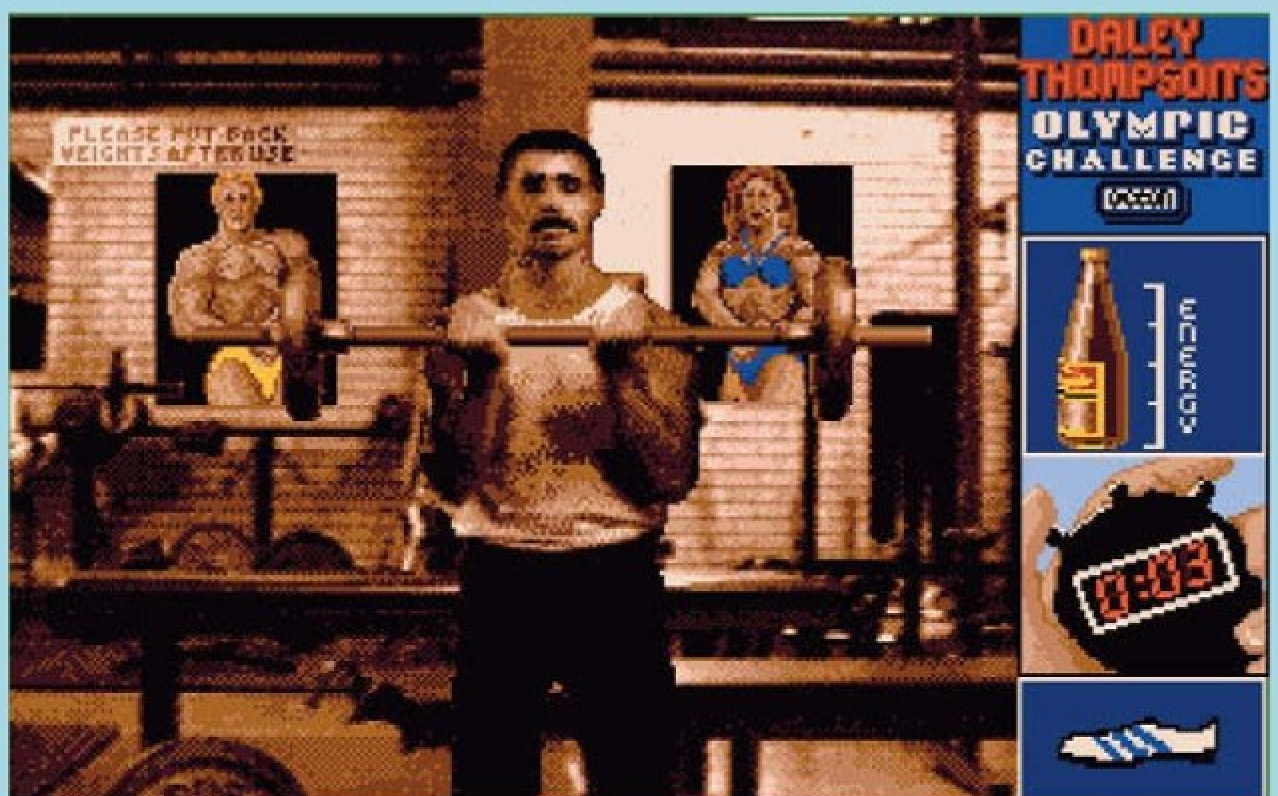


ARCHERY - BEYOND THE FORBIDDEN FOREST (C64)
"Shooting at stationary targets has become boring. Paul Norman's two *Forbidden Forest* titles for Cosmi test your skill with a bow and arrow as you face many dangerous creatures out to squash, stab, drain and swallow you in gruesome fashion."

SAILING - PIRATES! (C64)
"Over at the sailing, there have been calls for a disqualification of the Spanish competitors after they pulled alongside the British yacht and unleashed a broadside of cannon fire. You are trying to win buried pirate treasure, as well as the beautiful hand of a Governor's daughter."

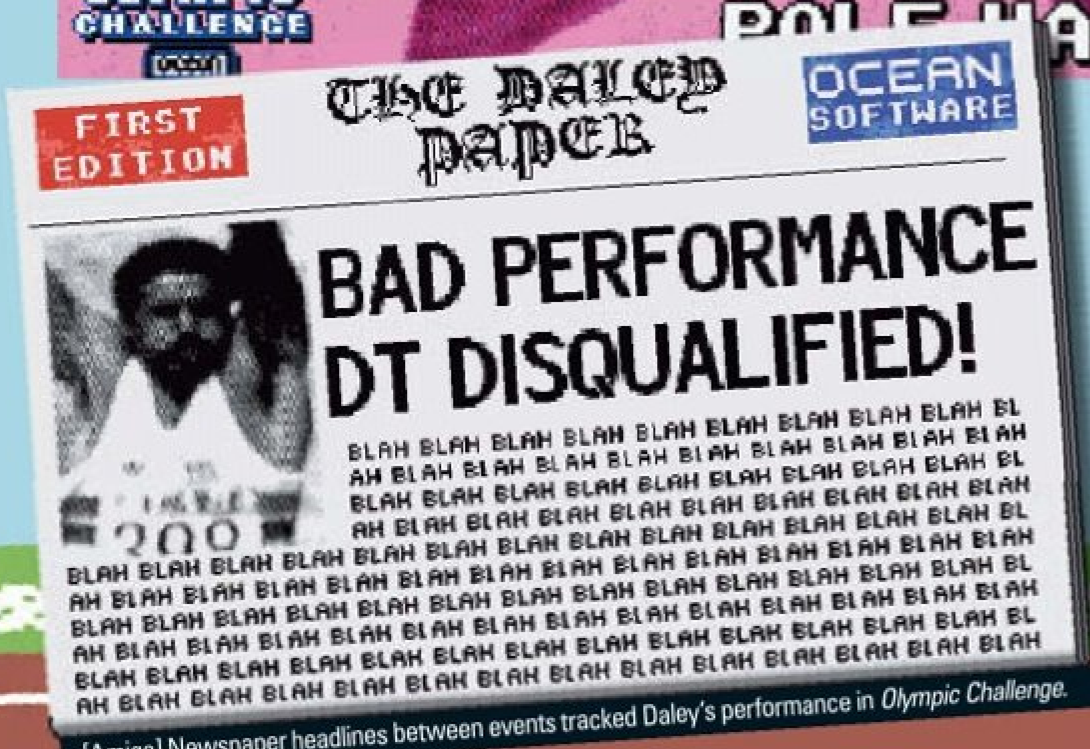


THE MAKING OF



» [Amiga] The 16-bit systems allowed for even more realistic looking visuals.





» [Amiga] Newspaper headlines between events tracked Daley's performance in *Olympic Challenge*.

common with several other Ocean releases, an audiotape of music was included. "I had one keyboard in my office, a Korg M1. We hired in a mixer and a drum machine and I composed and recorded the tune, called *The Challenge*. The vocal sample is Gary Bracey saying 'Challenge'." That led to an interesting meeting. "During work on *Olympic Challenge* we had a visit from Keith Chegwin for his show, *Chegwin Checks It Out*. I ended up being filmed with Cheggers pretending to play the theme tune from *Olympic Challenge*. We were both miming in time to the music. It ended up being used in the intro sequence to the show every week." says Dunn.

Gary Bracey met Daley himself, as photographic evidence from *CRASH* proves. "It was one of the first 'Ocean PR stunts' I was involved with and so was a little overwhelmed. I do remember him being extremely nice and friendly, though." The article jokes about Daley "[defacing] the loading screen by putting a large pair of spectacles on himself." Martin Galway missed out on meeting Daley, but he did meet another Olympic athlete. "Staff frequently recollect the visit from Cheggers, I did meet Tessa Sanderson though! She presented me with a Commodore Computing International award for Best Music at a trade show."

Artist Bill Harbison joined Ocean in 1987. "I was 20 years old and about to apply to Glasgow School of Art, but I was more interested in computer graphics. After a series of rejection letters I was beginning to think that working in the games industry was just a pipe dream, until a friend of mine suggested sending my work to Ocean. We didn't have a phone in our house so I asked my neighbour if I could put her phone number on the letter. She agreed and after a week she knocked on our door saying, "There's an English woman on the phone for William!" That English woman was Lorraine Starr, who is still a friend of mine. I was offered an interview in Manchester and since it was a ten-hour round-trip by train my mum bought me a return ticket by plane. Two weeks later I was on my way back to Manchester to work at Ocean. I had a meeting with Gary where I was introduced to programmer Dave Thompson and told that my first game would be *Olympic Challenge*. I couldn't believe it as I used to play *Decathlon* and *Super Test*, but there were a couple of drawbacks: I had never done any animation before, and I also had to draw the same graphics for an Amstrad. I'd not even so much as seen an Amstrad computer before, so this was going to be a challenge."

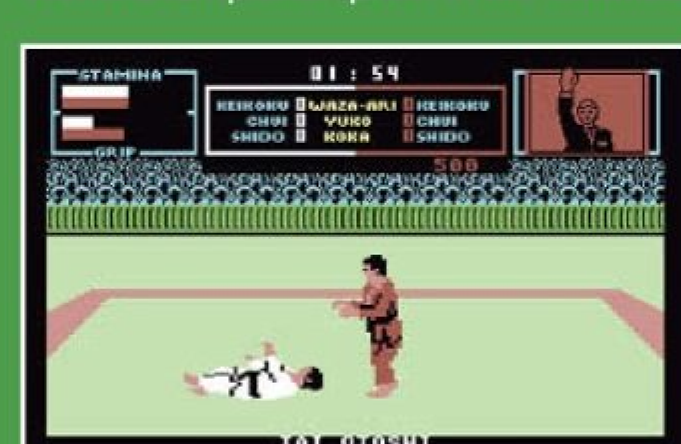
Harbison created the Spectrum graphics on the machine itself, but the animation proved tricky. "I had videos of Olympic events to study and work out the animation for the Daley sprite. The main hurdle was the training section – I over-ambitiously designed it without thinking of the animation involved. I wanted to do something that hadn't been done before and in the end made a lot of work for myself. I didn't have any reference for the moves Daley did: lifting dumbbells, sit ups and squats."

These required more joystick waggling to fill the Lucozade bottles that would power Daley through the events. Harbison continues, "I had to perform the moves in front of a mirror at home and make sketches on paper of the animation frames, then bring them into work and draw them on the Spectrum. So the Daley in the training sections is actually

BEST OF BRITISH

Other British companies signed up big names from the sporting world in the Eighties

MARTECH
Judo star Brian Jacks appeared in *Superstars* and helped promote judo simulation *Uchi Mata*. *Eddie Kidd's Jump Challenge* saw the player jumping over buses. *Geoff Capes' Strongman Challenge* included strenuous joystick waggling. *Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix* failed to make the starting grid for C64 users, before Gremlin celebrated his World Championship win in the Nineties.



CDS
The "interesting" world champion from Essex endorsed his own game – *Steve Davis Snooker*. Icon controls made it easy to play, and Edit Mode gave the opportunity to try out trick shots. *Brian Clough's Football Fortunes* featured a board game to play alongside the computer screen. Players were given paper money to buy and sell players, with the computer keeping track of it.

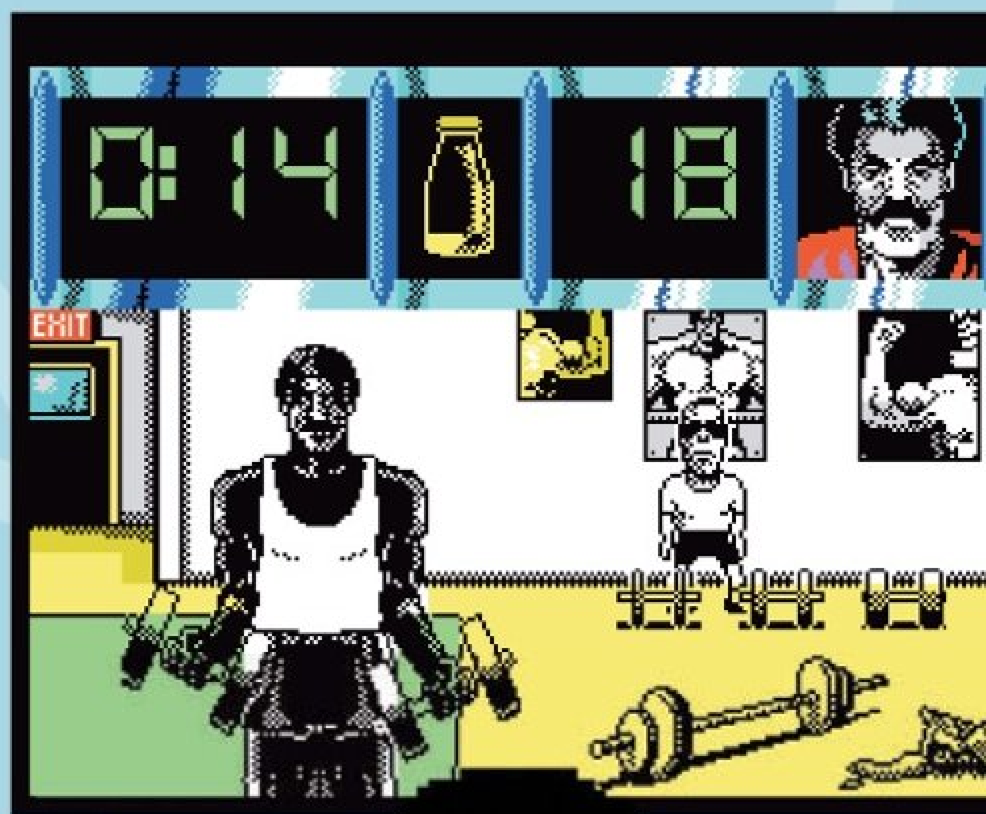


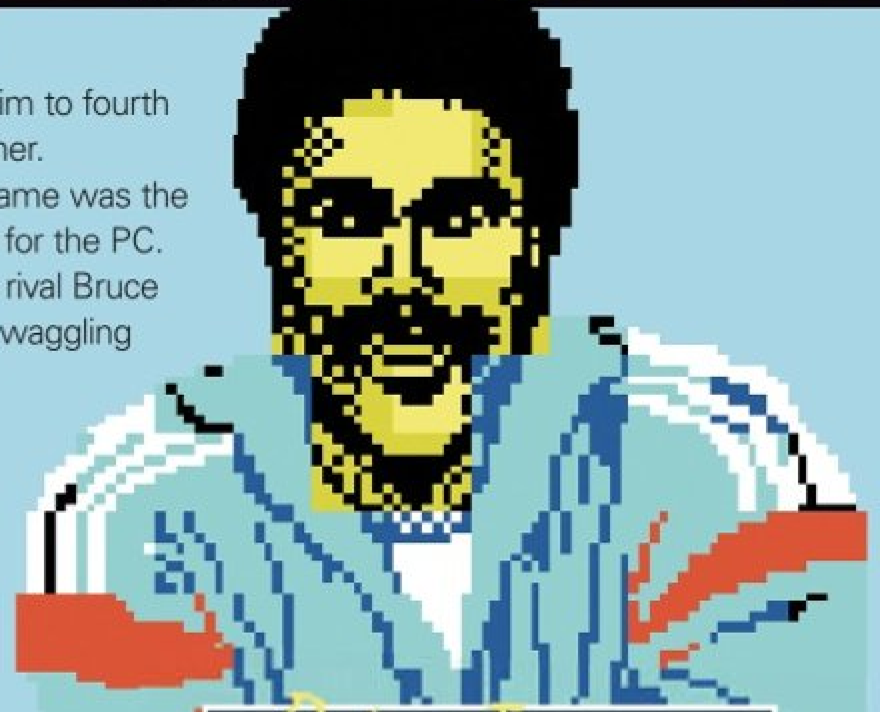


» [C64] "Overlaid sprites were easy if you knew how to trick the hardware into pre-latching the vertical co-ordinate," says Dave Collier.



» [Spectrum] Ocean's joystick wagglers could take a lot out of the average gamer. We remember developing blisters after one particularly hectic session.





> "So the Daley in the training sections is actually me" Bill Harbison

me. When the animation was done, the programmer Dave told me we had memory left over and I could put more graphics in if I wanted to. I remembered my friend back home who had asked me to put him in a game somehow, so I thought I'd introduce him as Daley's trainer and make him perform a little comedic routine in the background while Daley did his weight training." Amiga and ST users were treated to digitised pictures of Daley as a preview of the events.

"I managed to do a number of things that hadn't been done in the other sports games, the most obvious being to make Daley black and not white," says Harbison. "I also had to redesign the pole vault. Dave said early on in the project he had no idea how he was going to make the pole bend. I had always been a fan of *Dragon's Lair* and I thought maybe we could try something where you had to press a button at a certain time to complete the event, much like a quick time event today. So the event started with Daley running with the pole towards the jump. If you managed to plant the pole in the hole correctly, a window would pop up and show him riding up towards the bar and at the appropriate time you had to press the fire button and he'd flip over and complete the event. The reviews were mostly favourable and one singled out the pole vault being the most fun to play as it was so unique." Daley's pole may have broken in the real world, dropping him to fourth overall, but Ocean had another winner.

The final game to bear Daley's name was the little-known *World Class Decathlon* for the PC. In the US it was named after fierce rival Bruce Jenner, and the gameplay dropped waggling in favour of precisely timed mouse clicks. Daley retired due to injury in 1992 and became an ambassador for London's successful bid to host the Olympics in 2012. Daley's games even inspired the bizarre E4 Flash game *Janey Thomson's Marathon*, in which players have to bash buttons for more than two hours to compete in a full-length marathon… Final words from Dave Collier, who sums up the impact of the original *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, "I am pretty sure that was the game that made Ocean."



» [C64] Tug-Of-War requires strength and pace.



» [Spectrum] Slow and steady wins the race.



» [Spectrum] Pistol Shooting needs a good aim.



AMSOFT

The Amstrad developer got its snooker star in Alex Higgins, appearing in both snooker and pool games. However, there was no option to play against the computer. An embarrassing spelling mistake appeared on the cover of *Glen Hoddle's Soccer*. It should have been spelt Glenn with two n's. With the SSA-1 Speech Synthesizer add-on, the game talked to you.

GREMLIN

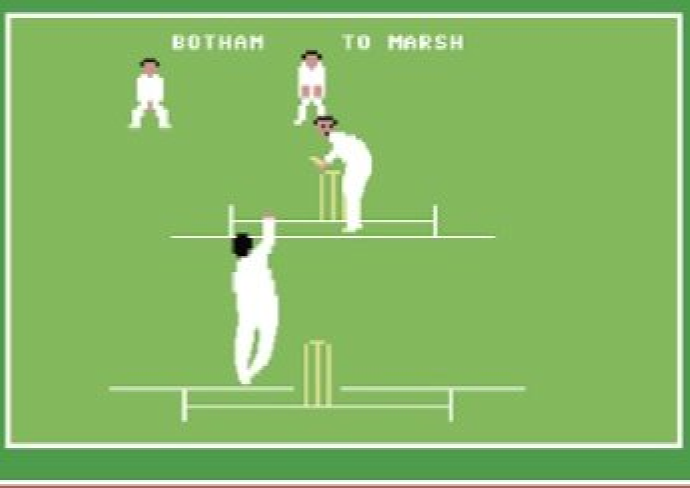
A hat-trick of Gary Lineker games appeared under Gremlin. *Superstar Soccer* was developed by American company SportTime, *Soccer Skills* was a joystick-waggling style training game and *Hot Shots* was one of the first to feature red and yellow cards. Stepping up to the oche was *John Lowe's Ultimate Darts*, featuring a mode where you could play on a real board and enter your scores.

AUDIOGENIC

Graham Gooch's name graced more than one release from Audiogenic, with changes to the teams, statistics and animations being the major differences to the games themselves. (Ashes hero Ian Botham got his game courtesy of Tynesoft). And former England and Liverpool captain Emlyn Hughes put his name to *Emlyn Hughes' International Soccer*.

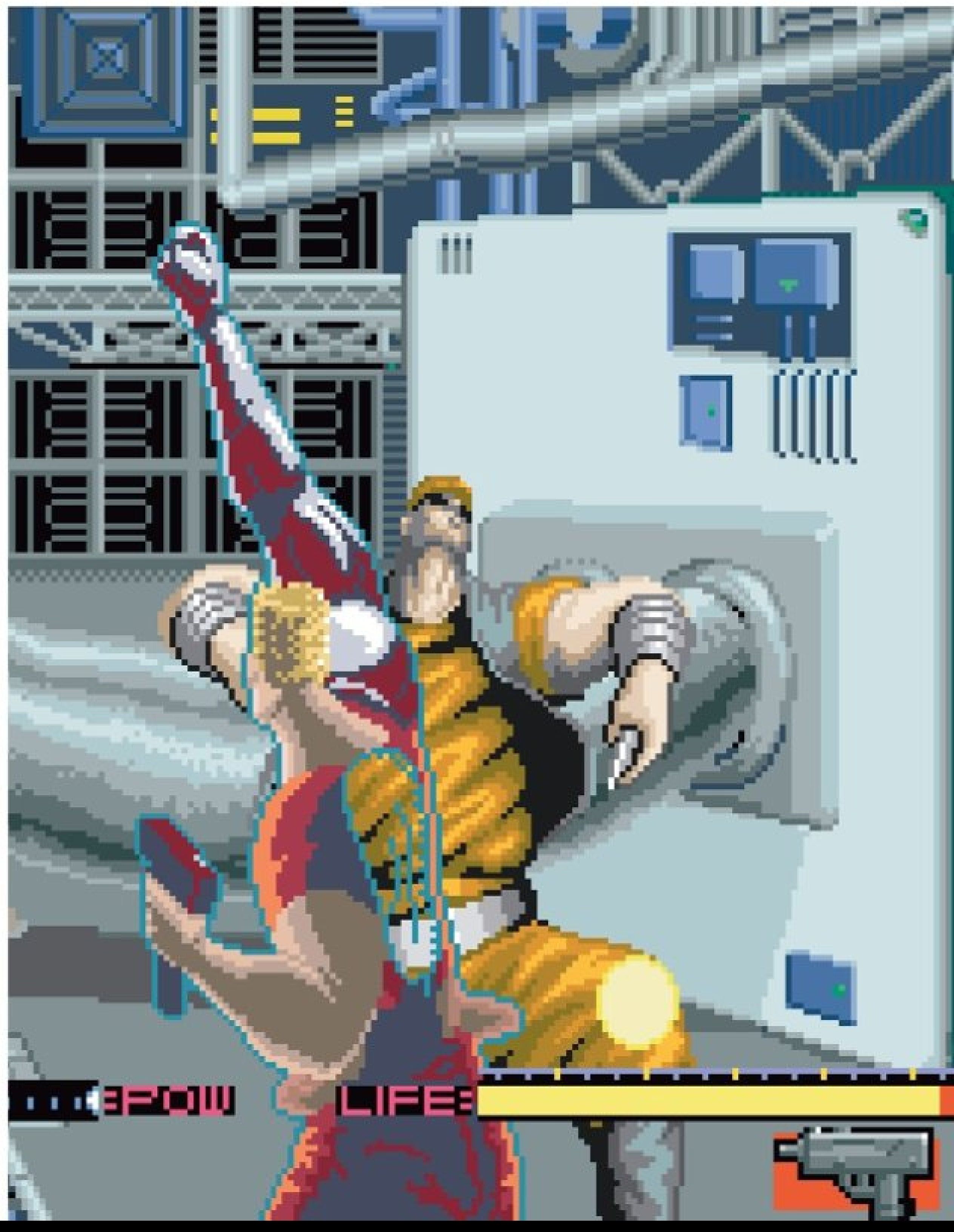


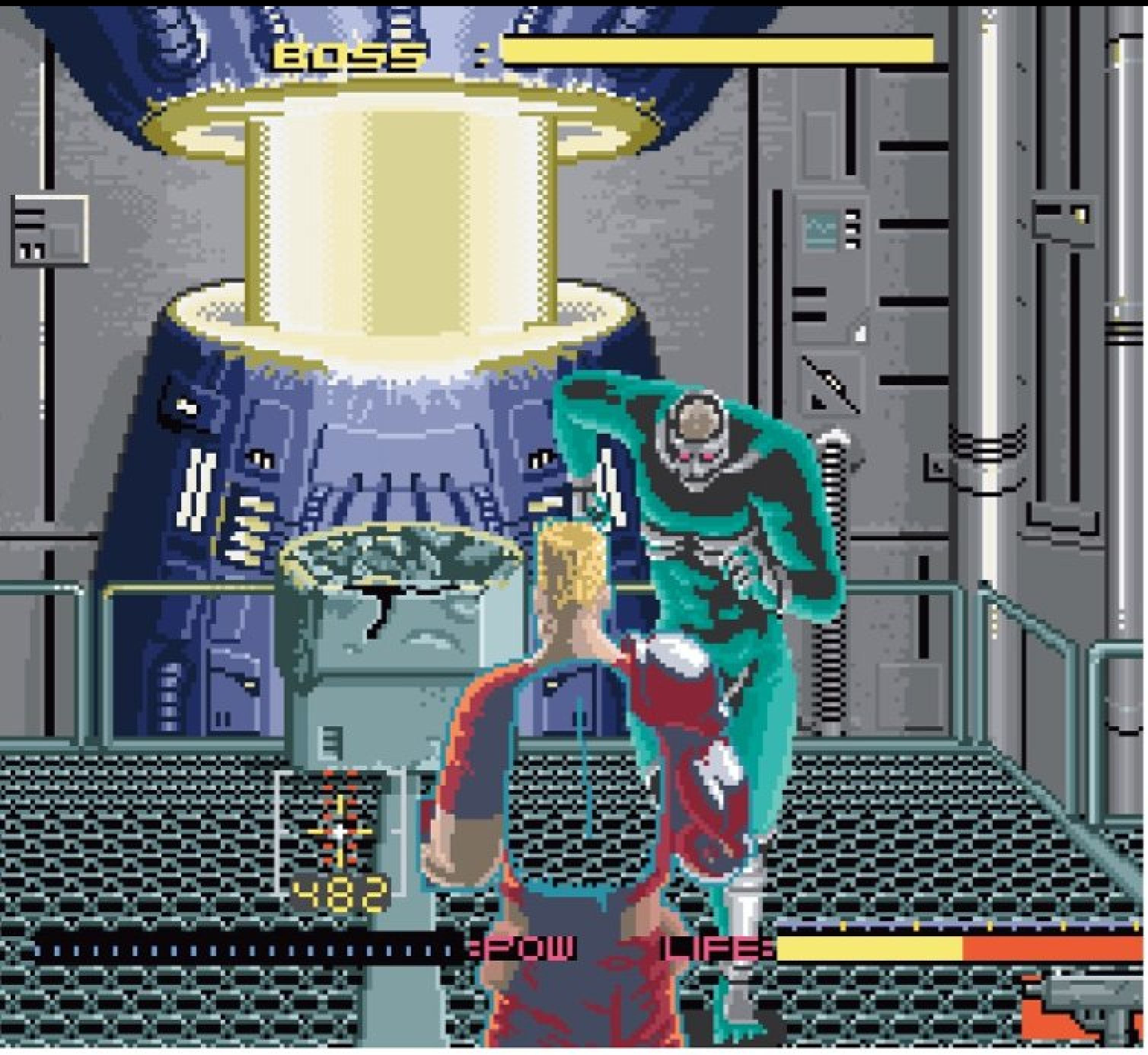


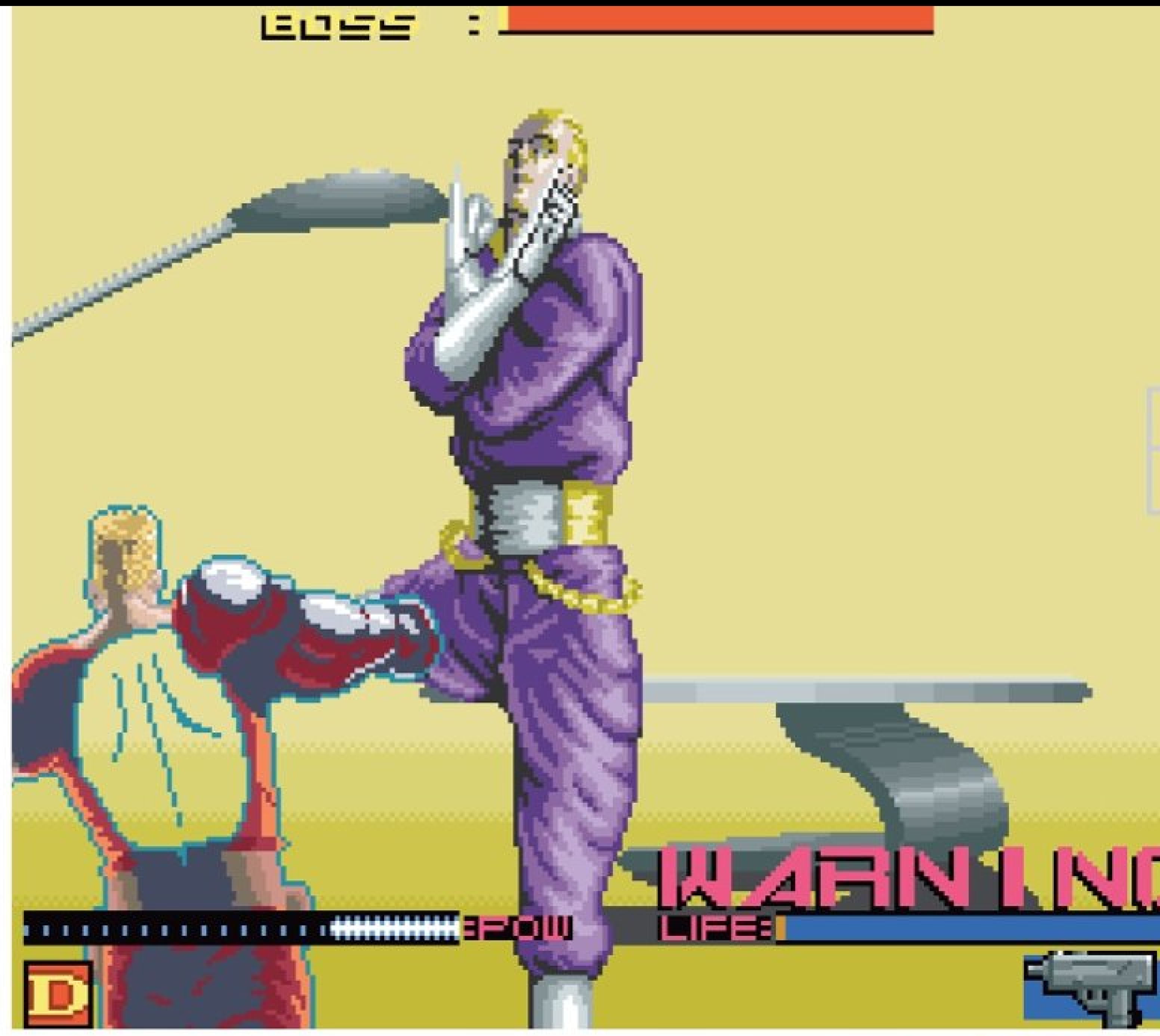



POW
LIFE


TOP
POW
LIFE


POW
LIFE





Dynamite Duke

THEY ALSO CALL ME MR GLASS

» RETROREVIVAL

» ARCADE
» SEGA
» 1989

***Dynamite Duke* is basically Sega's *Operation Wolf*, but with one big distinction. It's a distinction that, thanks to its hero having a window for a torso, is easy to spot: the camera is positioned behind Duke and thus you direct him and a crosshair.**

The story of *Dynamite Duke* is an example of the amusing narratives that came to arcade games in the Eighties. With Earth under threat from global warming, you play as Colonel Duke Rippern, a soldier who, after sustaining serious injury from a bomb blast, gets transformed into a cybernetic super soldier. Fitted with a powerful bionic arm and a torso that he has to wash with lemon juice and a squeegee, this new super-powered Duke is called on to stop a nefarious scientist who, as nefarious scientists are wont to do, has ambitions of ruling the Earth with an army of genetically engineered – and heavily armoured – super beings, specifically created to survive in the world without needing copious amounts of sun cream.

During a mission that is stretched over eight stages, and a final boss fight posing as a ninth, Duke must battle soldiers, helicopters, armoured vehicles and even ninjas across army barracks, forests and city streets. In typical *Operation Wolf* fashion, Duke can collect ammo, weapons and med packs by firing bullets at them. However, unlike Taito's gun game, if an enemy gets a little close for comfort, Duke can drop the weapons and lash out using his feet and fists instead. He has a limited number of charge punch attacks, too. Sapping large chunks from energy bars, they turn the screen all fire-orangey and come in pretty handy during the boss fights, most of which require the use of your melee attacks to take down your foe.

While the action can become a bit repetitive, what gets you hooked are the game's stunning anime visuals and unrelenting action. A memorable posse of cyberpunk-style bosses also keep you glued to the screen, with battles playing out in a style not too dissimilar to *Punch-Out!!*. Fun but ultimately throwaway, *Dynamite Duke* is a fairly decent shooter, even if its formula for loudly appealing to action-seeking arcade-goers is as transparent as Duke himself. *



RETRORATED



>> It's a relatively quiet month this issue, allowing Sega to dominate with a fantastic new edition of its Virtua Fighter franchise. We also take a gander at Snake's Vita outing and discover an awesome Cannon Fodder clone

PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Virtua Fighter 5 Final Showdown
A brilliant fighter at a brilliant price. Here's hoping that other publishers learn from Sega.



DAVID
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection
Yes the omission of *Peace Walker* annoys, but I'm a sucker for *Metal Gear Solid 2*, so I'm really enjoying this.



STUART
Virtua Fighter 5 Final Showdown
Sega reclaims its crown as the best 3D fighting game. Who would have thought it?

>> VIRTUA FIGHTER 5: FINAL SHOWDOWN



» [PS3] Jean Kujo is a new fighter to console owners, having first appeared in 2008's arcade-only *Virtua Fighter 5 R*.

GO DEEPER
The facts behind *Virtua Fighter 5*

>> **Over the years the cast of playable fighters has swollen from eight in the original game to 19 in *Final Showdown*.**

>> **The sumo wrestler Taka-Arashi made his debut in *Virtua Fighter 3*, but was absent from *Virtua Fighter 4*.**

>> **Akira Yuki is *Virtua Fighter*'s mascot.**

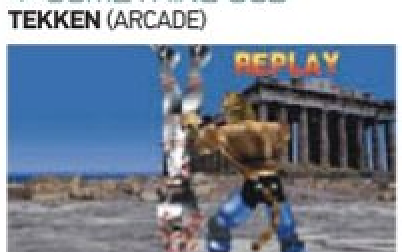
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown

ONE DAY ALL FIGHTERS WILL BE THIS GOOD

INFORMATION
- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PS3
- **ALSO ON:** XBOX 360
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £9.99
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER:** SEGA AM2
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2

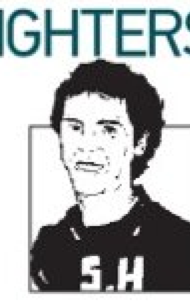
BRIEF HISTORY
» The first *Virtua Fighter* was released in 1993 and was created by the legendary Yu Suzuki. The series quickly won a reputation for its realism and depth, and has received numerous sequels and revisions over the past 19 years. It was the first polygon 3D fighter and its original roster consisted of eight vastly different fighters.

WHY NOT TRY
▼ SOMETHING OLD
TEKKEN (ARCADE)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
STREET FIGHTER 4 (PS3)





Sega's new fighter is immense. It might not be the prettiest brawler on the block – it's based on a six-year-old arcade game, after all – but it offers a staggering complexity that belies its three-button setup.

The world of *Virtua Fighter* may just revolve around punch, guard and kick, but this simple set-up boasts an incredible amount of depth, for those who are prepared to wade into the deep waters of Sega's fantastic brawler.

Many have already criticised *Final Showdown* for its seeming lack of depth, ugly visuals, and dearth of new characters and gameplay modes. These people are obviously playing a completely different game to us, as *Final Showdown* is a world away from the original arcade game.

Sega has changed the move sets and combos for every single fighter, meaning that even veterans are going to have relearn *Final Showdown* from scratch. But don't let that put you off purchasing; the complex throw system of *Virtua Fighter 5* has been slightly simplified, but the deep tutorial will eventually make masters out of even the most casual of *Virtua Fighter* players.

It may share the same name, but this is a world away from Sega's original *Virtua Fighter 5* and should be considered a brand new release for the series, so different is it for the 2006 game. It's also priced perfectly, offering amazingly stable netplay and more than enough gameplay modes for its £9.99 asking price, with the option of buying comprehensive costume packs for your favourite fighter should you wish to.

It's an excellent approach to the genre, and one that we hope other publishers will learn from. After hiding for too long in the shadows of *Tekken* and *Street Fighter*, Sega's magnificent brawler can once again proclaim itself to be the true king of fighters. Enjoy.





» [PS3] It's not the prettiest of current brawlers, but the animation of *Final Showdown* remains incredible to look at.

OPINION



The loss of Quest hurts a little, but in terms of a true arcade fighting experience *Final Showdown* is unmatched. The online netcode is amazingly stable, while the sheer breadth of each character is mesmerising. This is quite simply the best 3D fighter on the market and is a steal at its current asking price.

Darran Jones

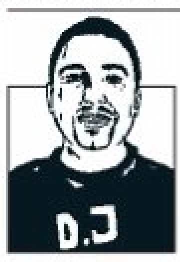
In a Nutshell
Sega's new fighter is a revelation, proving you don't need flashy supers in order to create a supremely deep competitive fighter. Here's hoping other publishers follow Sega's lead.

>> Score **98%**

Velocity

BLAST OFF WITH THIS ACE MINIS RELEASE

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PSP » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £3.99 » **PUBLISHER:** FUTURLAB » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1



***Velocity* proves that even the oldest of genres can be taken in fresh new directions. Ostensibly a shoot-'em-up at heart, you're initially required to do little more than to capture rescue pods while the screen scrolls ever forwards. Further play of *Velocity* reveals lots of clever little mechanics that have been beautifully and carefully integrated into the core gameplay. These mechanics massively enhance *Velocity* into something quite different…**

A boost allows you to quickly negotiate the maze-like levels that your ship flies through, a handy teleport lets you pass otherwise impenetrable barriers, bombs can be used to destroy things your forward firing lasers can't reach, while waypoints can be dropped to allow you to teleport back to specific points. These waypoint drops are particularly handy, because as levels grow in size you'll need to destroy numbered barriers in a specific order until you can unlock the pods they hold.

Velocity is a delight to play and not just because its heavily styled on old-school shooters like *Defender* that really require you to work to get the best out of their control systems. Levels will occasionally change in structure as well, with some requiring you to boost and teleport as quickly as you can against a tense time limit, while others have an almost puzzle-like approach to them. With 50 levels and additional challenges, there is plenty to get stuck into, making *Velocity* one of the best PSP Minis releases that money can currently buy.

>> Score **93%**



» [PS Vita] While not a bullet hell shooter, some sections do get hectic.



OPINION



It's a little too hardcore for my tastes, but there's no escaping that Futurlab has crafted an extremely polished little shooter. With its retro theme and loving tributes to sci-fi, Velocity eases you in but refuses to let you go once you succumb to its deep gameplay.

Stuart Hunt



Tiny Troopers

» **SYSTEM:** iOS » **ALSO ON:** NA
» **PRICE:** £1.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> ***Tiny Troopers* is** a surprisingly good clone of *Sensible Soccer's Cannon Fodder*, with intuitive touch controls, plenty of humour and cheerful visuals that capture the spirit of the original game. Moving around maps and shooting enemies are handled with simple touch controls, while flinging grenades and firing rockets are managed with simple swipes. The difficulty gets insanely unfair on its higher chapters and we could do without the in-app purchases, as we're paying enough anyway, but it still remains a highly enjoyable strategy game.

>> Score **77%**



Operation Wow

» **SYSTEM:** IOS » **ALSO ON:** Android
» **PRICE:** £0.69 » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

>> **Another iOS clone.** This time based on Taito's *Operation Wolf*. One of the big features of *Operation Wow* is its ability to have multi-touch fire. The downside to this though is that it makes *Operation Wow* incredibly easy to play. Another issue is the high-resolution visuals, which are quite frankly horrible, lacking the realism and character of Taito's arcade classic. We're also not keen on how long it takes to throw grenades either, as it's all too easy to hit civilians. There's plenty here for your 69 pennies, but *Operation Wow* just lacks any sort of excitement. Pity.

>> Score **54%**



The Adventures Of Shuggy

» **SYSTEM:** PC » **ALSO ON:** XBOX 360
» **PRICE:** £6.99 » **PLAYERS:** £6.99

>> **Shuggy's aim in** life is simple; he just wants to collect all the gems found on each screen of his new haunted mansion. The way he does it is anything but simple though, as each single screen stage is a tricky conundrum that can involve rotating the screen, teleporting, using multiple Shuggys, herding little monsters, and all sorts of other clever tricks and techniques, including a sweet co-op mode. It's infuriatingly difficult towards the end, but there's enough magic in *Shuggy* to make up for it.

>> Score **78%**



Metal Gear Solid HD Collection

» **SYSTEM:** PS VITA » **ALSO ON:** PS3, XBOX 360
» **PRICE:** £29.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> **While Snake's PS2** adventures look superb on the Vita's razor-sharp screen, this package is weaker than BluePoint's original *HD Collection*. The loss of *Peace Walker* means there is more focus on the remaining two games (*Metal Gear 1+2* also feature), and *Sons Of Liberty 2* still feels very lacklustre. *Snake Eater* remains superb, and even though this is the third iteration from Konami in the last six months, we're still not tired of playing it. A decent portable collection, but much weaker than the home ports.

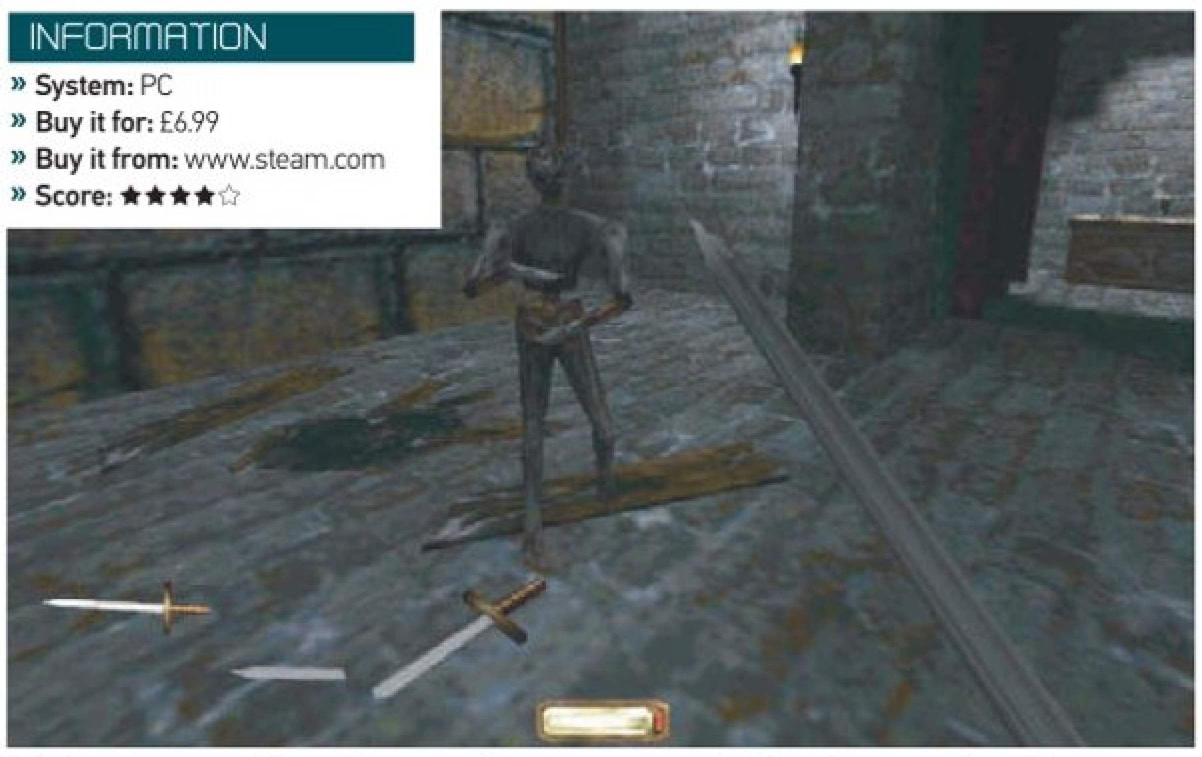
>> Score **80%**

RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we take a look at the latest classics that have been re-released for a new generation of gamers

DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH

Thief Gold



INFORMATION
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** £6.99
» **Buy it from:** www.steam.com
» **Score:** ★★★★☆

It's been ages since Square first announced that it was planning to return to the excellent *Thief* franchise. Fortunately, the publisher knows our pain, so has decided to ease it a little by re-releasing the first two games on Steam recently.

Thief Gold is our focus here, and we're pleased to report that the innovative game, which wowed gamers back in 1998 with its brand new gameplay mechanics and high focus on light and shadow, still manages to be highly entertaining. Like many 3D games, *Thief* looks rather basic nowadays, but the subtle use of lighting still works brilliantly, allowing you to approach *Thief*'s many missions in a wide variety of ways.

Many aspects of *Thief* have been greatly improved, both in its own sequels and by other games (both recent and new) and the intriguing story – which follows the misadventures of street orphan Garrett as he struggles to make his way in the treacherous, and blandly named, The City – remains strangely compelling.

Creeping around and silently killing guards is still highly entertaining, mainly because the then-innovative sound detection system still works so well, and using your many different arrows to solve in-game puzzles remains immensely satisfying. The combat is admittedly clunky, but a true thief will always try to avoid it anyway.

With *Thief* being a re-release, Square Enix has wisely chosen to opt for the later *Thief: Gold Edition* that was released the following year. This means you're getting three additional levels (loosely based on what was cut from the original release), an editor, and an interesting making-of about the game's creation.

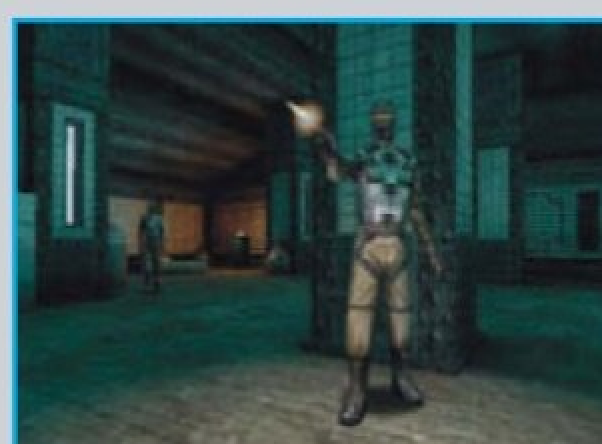
>> OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



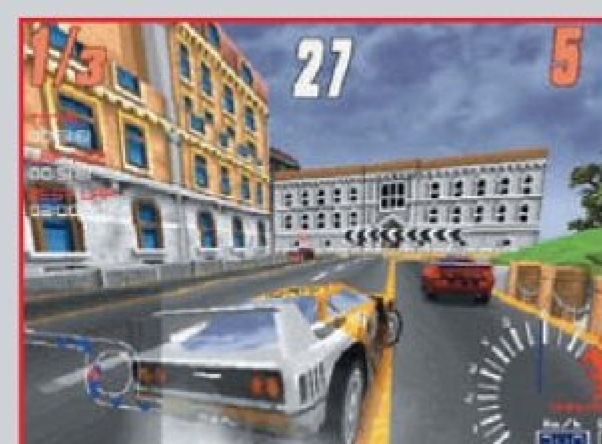
Kingpin: Life Of Crime
» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** €9.99
» **Buy it from:** www.dotemu.com
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆
» Play *Kingpin* today and it's easy to see why it caused so much controversy. It's just an incredibly violent and often unpleasant game. This is mainly down to the deformable skin used on characters, which allows you to puncture their body parts in all manner of gruesome ways. Surprisingly innovative for its time (its mod upgrading was a first for the genre) *Kingpin* is still an insane amount of fun.



Metal Slug 3
» **System:** Xbox 360
» **Buy it for:** 900 Points
» **Score:** ★★★★★
» After an absolute age, *Metal Slug 3* finally hits the Virtual Console. As expected, it's an excellent port, allowing you to get stuck in to one of the best games in the franchise, or even the genre for the matter. The trademark stunning animation and quirky sense of humour returns, but everything's been turned up to 11, with more over-the-top bosses and new vehicles to play around with. It's certainly difficult, but the satisfying pace keeps it fresh.



Deus Ex
» **System:** PS2
» **Buy it for:** £7.99
» **Score:** ★★★☆☆
» If you've access to a PC, we'd recommend the current steam release as it's £2 cheaper, more technically proficient and based on the *Game Of The Year Edition*. Otherwise you'll still be perfectly happy with this alternative version of the popular game. Surprisingly streamlined and well suited to a joypad, the new level layouts (on certain stages) keep things fresh for veterans. It suffers from an iffy frame-rate and intrusive loading times, but it remains enjoyable.



Screamer
» **System:** SNES
» **Buy it for:** €5.99
» **Buy it from:** www.dotemu.com
» **Score:** ★★☆☆☆
» The years have not been kind to Interplay's *Screamer*. Once upon a time it was netting all sorts of high scores, thanks to its fast-paced and slick arcade-based gameplay. It's a different matter now though, with the jerky frame-rate and bland track design making it feel far more dated than it actually is. Tearing around in a Lamborghini Countach remains fun for a while, but it now feels very lightweight to play.

▼ VIRTUAL CONSOLE

After last month's big update we're back to dregs again, so here's a mixture of new and old titles currently available.

Mega Man X2
» **System:** SNES
» **Buy it for:** 800 points
» **Score:** ★★★★☆



Rayman
» System: Game Boy Color
» Buy it for: £4.99
» Score: ★★☆☆☆

Bomberman Hero
» System: N64
» Buy it for: 1000 Points
» Score: ★★☆☆☆

Pilotwings
» System: SNES
» Buy it for: 800 Points
» Score: ★★★★★

▼ PSN

Unfortunately a lot of cool PS2 content is being ignored in favour of war games. Lots and lots of identikit war games.

Shellshock Nam '67
» System: PS2
» Buy it for: £5.49
» Score: ★★☆☆☆

Conflict Vietnam
» System: PS2
» Buy it for: £5.49
» Score: ★★☆☆☆

Arc The Lad III
» System: PS One
» Buy it for: £3.99
» Score: ★★★☆☆

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon
» System: PS2
» Buy it for: £7.99
» Score: ★★★☆☆



▼ PC SERVICES

The various PC services continue to trickle out a steady rate of decent games, covering a wide variety of different genres.

Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver 2
» Buy it for: $9.99
» Buy it from: www.gog.com
» Score: ★★★★☆

Fragile Alliance
» Buy it for: $5.99
» Buy it from: www.gog.com
» Score: ★★★★☆

Rune Classic
» Buy it for: £6.99
» Buy it from: www.steam.com
» Score: ★★★☆☆

Revenge Of Shinobi
» Buy it for: £1.99
» Buy it from: www.steam.com
» **Score:** ★★★★★



Special Offers for classic gaming fans...

Complete your retro collection with books, DVDs and mugs that no retro gamer should be without!

Mugs

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Retro Gamer Mugs
Retro Gamer has developed a range of mugs based around the iconic games and imagery that makes our computing history so great. We have only produced 250 of each limited edition mug so hurry they won't hang around for long!
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Binders



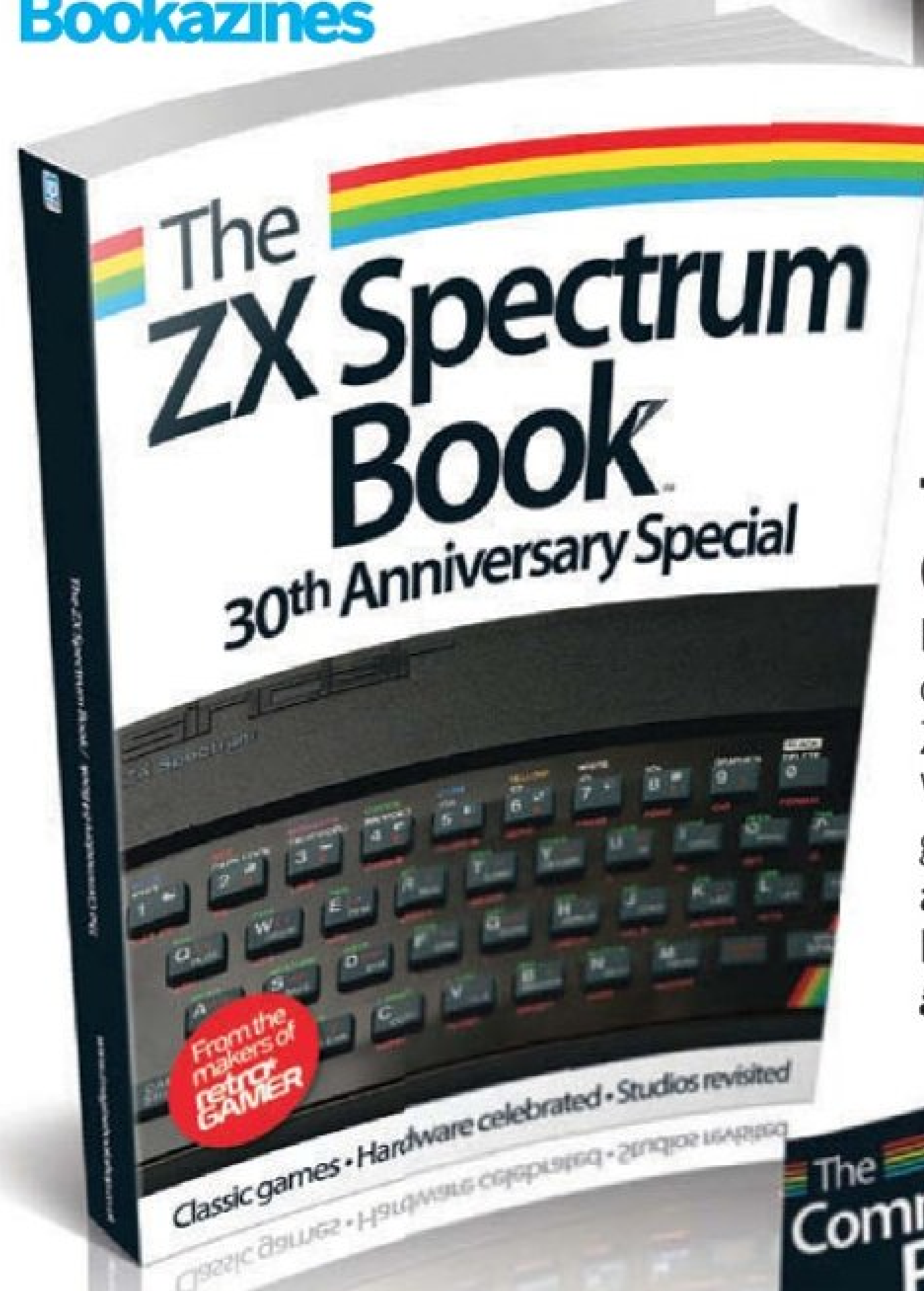
Retro Gamer Binder
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DVDs



Retro Gamer DVD eMag Load 3
The latest and greatest edition of the ever-popular Retro Gamer DVD eMag series. This DVD-ROM includes issues 56 to 80 and will play on a PC or Mac –you can ever transfer pages to an iPad.
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Bookazines

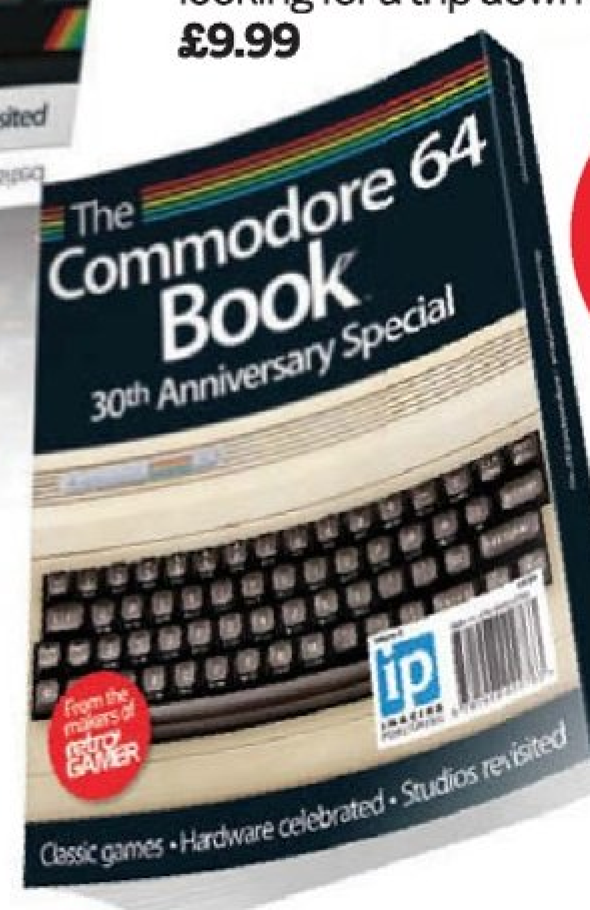


Double-sided book

The ZX Spectrum / Commodore 64 Book

From the makers of Retro Gamer comes the ultimate guides to the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64. With over 250 pages full of amazing games and in-depth features, this 30th anniversary special is a must for anyone looking for a trip down memory lane.
£9.99

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HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews



In the news this month I've mentioned Retrospectiva 2012 since they're running a competition for BASIC games on just about any 8-bit computer. By total coincidence, I've decided to point out that there's all manner of cross-development tools on current PCs that make creating BASIC programs for 8-bits easier along with some very impressive compilers to make those programs move faster and graphics tools to boot. Just saying, like…

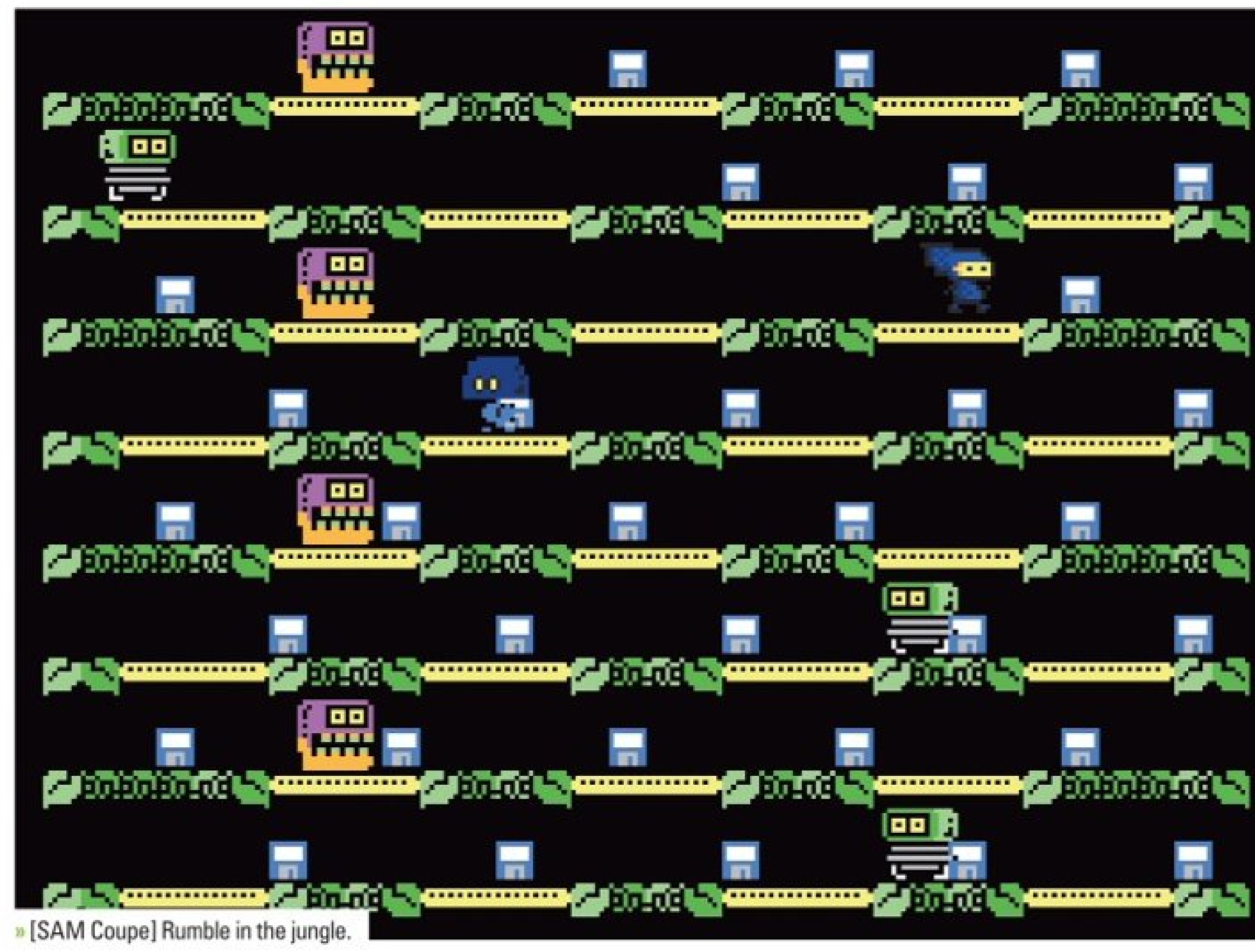


LOST DISKS OF SAM

I KNOW I LEFT THEM AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE…



» [SAM Coupe] May the farce be with you.



» [SAM Coupe] Rumble in the jungle.

Moebius, a collector of some repute and not a little obsessiveness, woke up to find himself in an alternative universe where, due to a slight variation in the evolution of the Sinclair Spectrum, his prized collection of new-in-box games was no longer complete. He now needs to go foraging for the fabled Lost Tapes of Albion. And that's what he did, found all of them and was very happy with his now even larger collection of rare and interesting games. Until a thought suddenly struck him: as a collector of some repute and quite probably an obsessive compulsion disorder sufferer, what he really needs for this collection to truly be complete is everything for the SAM Coupe as well!

And by a strange coincidence, gathering the rarest of those prizes involves picking up items from platforms while avoiding the resident nasties, although for this particular outing Moebius is gathering SAM-compatible 3.5" floppy disks. *Lost Disks Of SAM* is a reworking of *Lost Tapes Of Albion* – which was released for the Spectrum's 30th birthday by David Hughes of Stonechat Productions – and takes advantage of the SAM Coupe's extra graphical abilities. All of the cutesy charm of the Spectrum original is present, but with an added layer of detail making everything look more like an Atari ST.

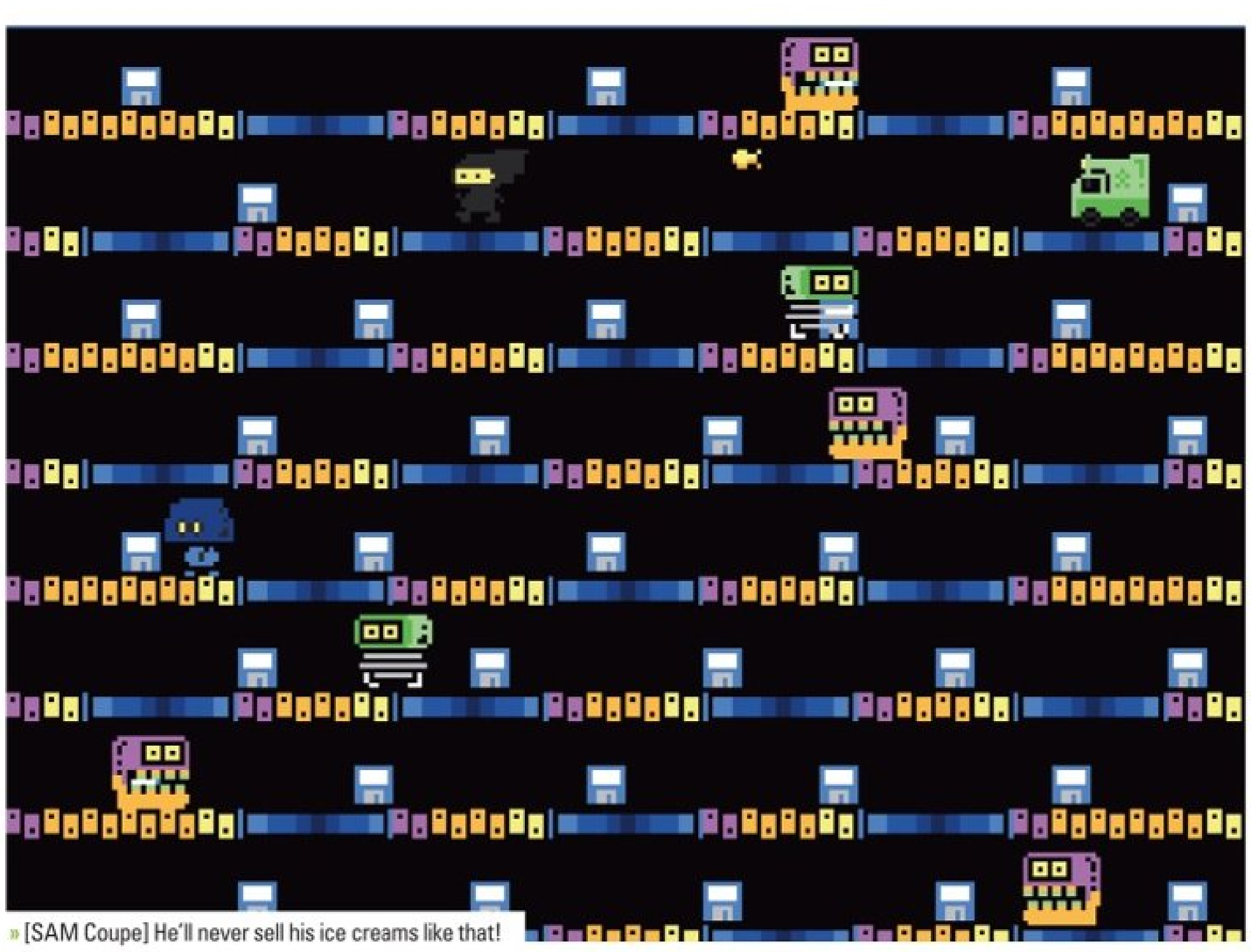
The game itself plays similarly to Hughes' previous Spectrum release, *Endless Forms Most Beautiful* which we covered back in issue 101, with players guiding Moebius around the screen while avoiding enemies and collecting objects from the platforms they're patrolling. If Moebius is instructed to walk off the screen, he'll be wrapped around to the far side and appear on a different level; stepping off to the left returns him one level up on the right and leaving stage right will plonk him one platform down to the left. So the knack to playing *Lost Disks* seems to be a combination of acclimatising to that wrapping around of the play area and learning how the various enemies move; some simply make their way back and forth across the screen at a fixed speed while others will notice Moebius when he's on the same platform as they are and react to him.

The game offers four difficulty settings at the start of play, although the "easy" setting is probably best for most players since the others are all tough as nails, despite the game being extremely generous with lives. Collisions with enemies are only fatal if Moebius is wearing his original outfit, however, if he's levelled up on the intermission screen between stages – where he disappears into a phone box to change – he'll only lose one of his outfits on contact. The difficulty is challenging but fair, and the enhanced graphics show off the SAM Coupe's abilities, so it's worth downloading it to discover what the machine is capable of. And it's nice to see the SAM getting some homebrew love.

88%



FORMAT: SAM COUPE
DEVELOPED BY: BLACK JET
LINK: WWW.BLACKJET.CO.UK
RELEASE DATE: 2012
PRICE: FREE



» [SAM Coupe] He'll never sell his ice creams like that!

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

FAIRY WELL

» **FORMAT:** C64 » **DEVELOPER:** WIDE PIXEL GAMES AND RGCD
» **LINK:** WWW.RGCD.CO.UK/P/SHOP.HTML » **RELEASE DATE:** 2012
» **PRICE:** £20 (CARTRIDGE, SHIPPING VARIES) OR FREE DOWNLOAD

The forest has been ruled over by the fairy families for centuries, but their reigns are under threat after a powerful dark wizard kidnaps their four princesses. A rescue mission is mounted and one of three characters, each of which with its own strengths and weaknesses, can be taken into the wizard's cave system.

Once a fairy rescuer is selected, the player guides them around the flick screen stages, using keys to open bonus item chests, avoiding or shooting the wizard's minions and collecting the three crystals needed to unlock the titular fairy well that leads to the level's boss battle. Each stage is randomly generated and vast with it, so the game helpfully draws a map that can be viewed at any point during play.

Despite being crammed into a teensy 16K of ROM, the presentation throughout is excellent and the gameplay enjoyable; C64 lovers who want to try before they buy can download a cartridge ROM image from the RGCD website to give it a go.

90%



» [C64] Come at me, bro.



» [C64] Then you turn left at the lights…

MAJIKAZO

» **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** LEMONIZE
» **LINK:** KIKSTART.EU/MAJIKAZO-SPEC
» **RELEASE DATE:** 2012 » **PRICE:** FREE

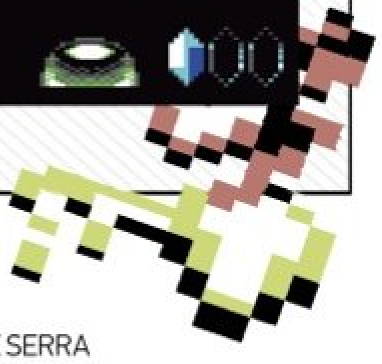
The player's character in *MajiKazo* is Flush, a freelancing wizardly janitor who specialises in cleaning up other people's magical messes. Each of the twenty-four rooms in the castle he's been hired to tidy has a couple of generators that issue creatures of the night. While Flush can't cast a spell on these spawning points to prevent that happening directly, if he destroys a certain quota of enemies from each, they'll run out of energy and shut down of their own accord. He'll have to be quick though; there's a time limit for each room.

MajiKazo is a little like *Bomberman* without the bombs; the cyan and blue blocks can't usually be destroyed but shooting some of the reds reveals power-ups to make Flush move faster or give him better weapon spells. The latter are essential, since most of the enemies are colour-coded and only the corresponding firepower will dispatch them. *MajiKazo* is fast-paced, colourful, occasionally frustrating but very entertaining.

85%

» [Spectrum] A hard day's knight.





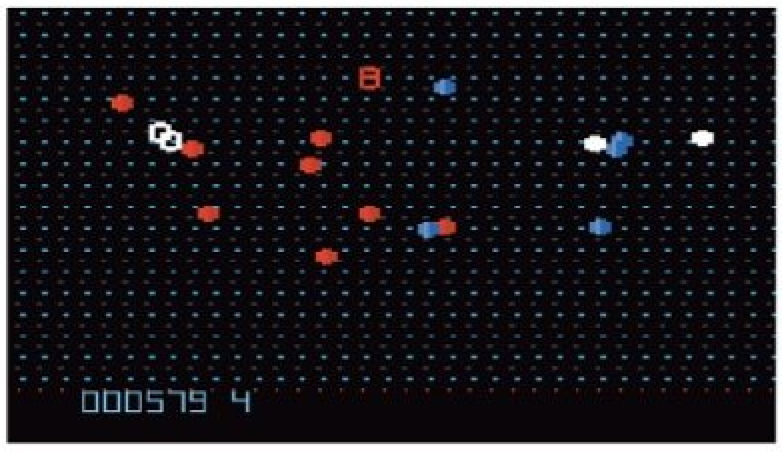
ATLAS

» **FORMAT:** ATARI 7800 » **DEVELOPER:** SIMONE SERRA
» **LINK:** KIKSTART.EU/ATLAS-7800 » **RELEASE DATE:** 2012 » **PRICE:** FREE

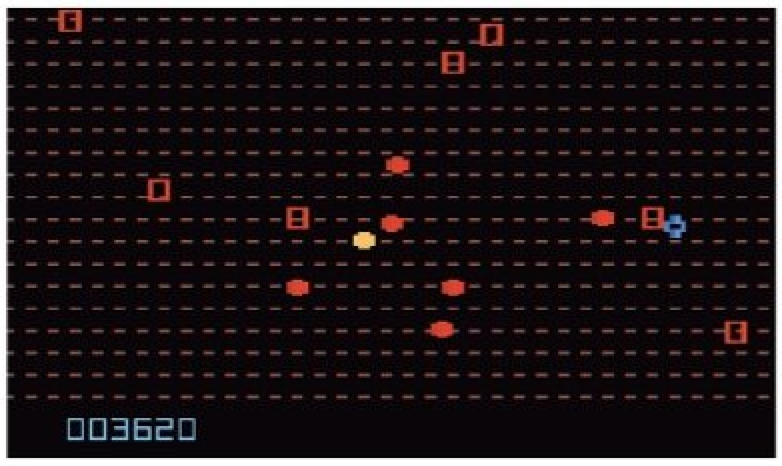
In the Cluster, an obscure part of the System, every form of life exists only to serve the Supreme Supervisor… at least until a mysterious, polymorphic piece of synthetic life categorised as Atlas appears. Atlas can exist in four states – adapter, connector, breaker and trapper – and some believe its ultimate destiny is to challenge the Supreme Supervisor itself.

So it's basically a *Tron*-inspired storyline bolted onto what is, essentially, a collection of four fairly simple mini-games, each with its own distinct objective. Only one life is issued, which is forfeited if time runs out or a collision with an enemy occurs, but the player can cycle Atlas between states at any time during play and this can be used to reset the timer or rescue it from perilous situations. Four simple but frenetic action games that are entertaining in short bursts once the knack to each is understood.

68%



» [Atari 7800] Run around… now!



» [Atari 7800] This is mine, this is mine…

WHAT'SBREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Plus/4] Off into time… and space!

» TIME, GENTLEMEN, PLEASE

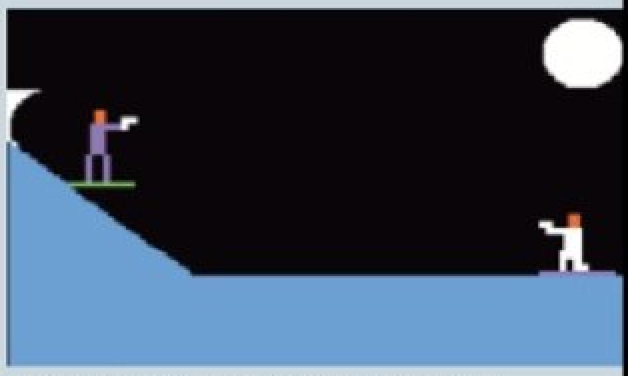
We were rather excited to read news of a follow-up to the excellent *Adventures In Time* was being developed for the Commodore Plus/4. Boasting new, smoother sprite movement and quite a bit of graphical variety between the stages, this is shaping up to be one of the most impressive games we've ever seen for the 264 series. The developer's blog with some preview videos to admire is at **kichydesign.blogspot.co.uk**



» [Spectrum] *Space Disposal* was developed with AGD.

» LETS GO ADVENTURING

Jonathan Cauldwell is, as we've noted in the past, a busy man and has just released version 3 of his Arcade Game Designer. This latest update can produce games for any Spectrum but needs 128K for the editor because it adds quite a few new toys. Previous versions of AGD drove the Bog Brothers' excellent *Trooper Point 5* as well as *Space Disposal* and *Chopper Drop* by Paul Jenkinson. **kikstart.eu/agd3-spec**



» [Apple 2] The first entry to Retrospectiva 2012.

» COMPETITION TIME

Retrospectiva is a competition, hosted by the impressive-sounding Fundación Museo ICATEC, which harks back to the days of 8-bit computing, not just the gaming but the bedroom programming too. For this year's competition, entrants are invited to submit their own games for just about any 8-bit computer… as long as they're written in BASIC! Compilers are allowed within limits so this could turn out to be either appalling or awesome. **kikstart.eu/retrospectiva-2012**

HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

>> BRAAAAAINS

If we're honest, we never expected to see zombies at the helm of flying saucers, but here comes the *Flying Zombie Invasion* with swarms of the undead rocking up in search of brain-flavoured snacks. Only your spaceship-operating avatar stands between them and the tasty treats that are humankind! It's just a cheeky attempt to squeeze the near-ubiquitous zombies into a 2D shooter but from what we've seen so far it looks fun in a tongue-in-cheek kind of way. **kikstart.eu/flying-zombie** goes over to the XBLIG shop page. Check it out if you're a zombie fan.

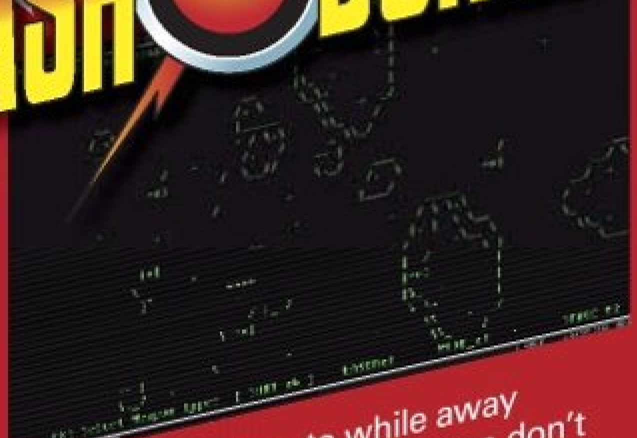


>> RPGS FOR BUSY BEES

Five Minutes RPG – or *5MinRPG* for short according to the XBLIG store – is, as the name suggests, an action roleplaying game that can be played in a reasonably short amount of time. We've only given it a brief test but it certainly looks the part, offering random dungeons, equipment and skills to collect and, according to the notes, if you want, campaigns can be longer than five minutes too. Start adventuring online at **kikstart.eu/5min-rpg-xblig**



FLASH BOREDOM



Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer's** Flash game of the month. This month we look at **Battle For Asciion.**

There's nothing like a good scrolling shoot-'em-up, even if the entire game is rendered in ASCII graphics! Fly your sleek, character-based space fighter into battle, destroying the aliens and collecting power-ups for your three weapon systems to deliver a serious kicking to the end-of-level bosses. **kikstart.eu/asciion-flash**

XBOX LIVE INDIE GAMES ROUND-UP





PLASMANIA

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/PLASMANIA-XBLIG

J.K

***Plasmania* is probably** one of the simplest XBLIG games we've ever played; guide your white ball around the screen, collect blue balls to charge the bar at the bottom of the play area while avoiding the red balls, which decrease it. In gameplay terms, it's almost up there with *Pong*.

Gathering the blues will also make the white ball bigger and, while some of the collected energy can be dumped to the score to scale it back to its starting size, the larger the player's ball, the better the score bonus.

This is about as graphically sparse as it's possible to get without resorting to pure geometric shapes and the gameplay doesn't change between stages, but we found it strangely compelling – that's not an unreserved recommendation though, so download the demo version first!

JEWEL FEVER

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/JEWEL-FEVER-XBLIG

J.K

Right at the beginning we'll state what is probably obvious from the screenshot; *Jewel Fever* is yet another "match three" game. Based on the successful *Bejeweled* formula, three or more matching coloured gems need to be lined up vertically or horizontally to make them disappear, leaving room for more gems to drop into play.

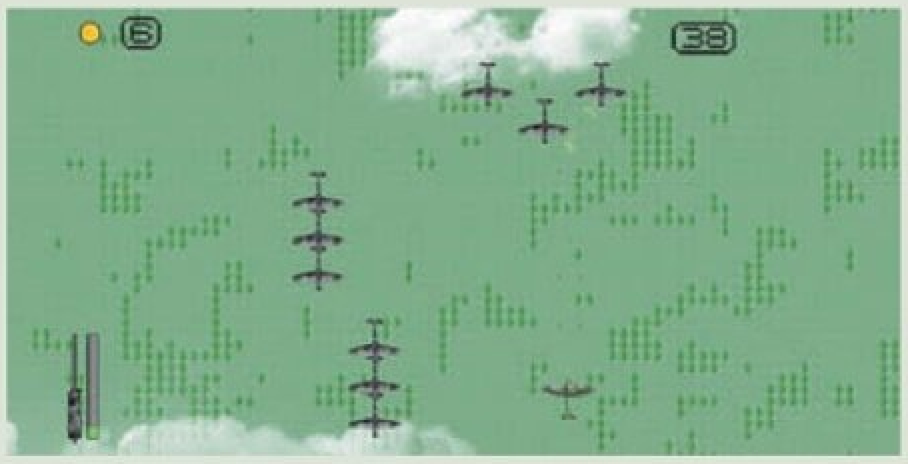
Three play modes are offered. Normal Mode has a quota of shapes that must be cleared from the playfield before the time runs out in order to move to the next level, Quick Mode is one stage against the timer, and Infinite Mode is there to let players practise without having to worry about getting to the next levels or the timer expiring. It's a good way to work through bouts of "*Bejeweled* blindness"; those moments where players can stare at the screen until the time runs out but still can't locate any potential moves.



Although they are very common on the indie scene, *Bejeweled* clones aren't necessarily a bad thing if done well and *Jewel Fever* is indeed a solidly built and playable rendition of PopCap's original. Graphics and sound are reasonable, the presentation throughout is solid, with leaderboards available for the Normal and Quick modes and, while it's not particularly feature laden and doesn't boast any radical new in-game twists, *Jewel Fever* is still an agreeable offering for the 80 points asked.







SPITFIRE

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/SPITFIRE-XBLIG

J.K

If anybody wants an example of why tinkering with the shoot-'em-up format can be risky, *Spitfire* is a prime example. The plane's controls are locked to horizontal movement, enemies only move vertically but are crack shots so dodging their fire can be insanely hard and, until the plane's cool-down feature is powered up, the weapon overheat gets in the way of actually shooting!

There's no score either; coins are dropped by some destroyed enemies which are banked after a wave and can be used to upgrade the plane or buy another between games, reducing a significant chunk of the experience to grinding the first ten stages – one of which is, at the time of writing, inexplicably empty – for gold.



THE REMAKING OF DOWNFALL

We spent far too long playing Graham Humphrey's Downfall last month, so it seemed like a good idea to nab him for a quick chat about gravity, mice, Amigas and platforms



» [Amiga] A little mouse with clogs on.



» [Amiga] A self-raising flower!



» [Amiga] We always wanted a pet rock.

Q&A

Where did the idea of an Amiga conversion of *Downfall* come from initially Graham?

Graham Humphrey: It all started back in January. I was keen to get back into Amiga programming, having not written anything meaningful since *Tank Wars* in 2006 (a game which **Retro Gamer** gave 85% back in issue 31) but was lacking ideas. I wanted to do something that would hopefully be good fun to play but also simple enough that I had a realistic opportunity to finish the project. I put the question to the English Amiga Board and received an impressively large number of suggestions, but when somebody posted a link to a video of the Jaguar version of *Downfall*, I knew I wanted to get it up and running on the Amiga. It just ticked all the boxes for me.

How much time did it actually take to write and was any code from the previous versions used?

GH: I started coding the game on 8 January and compiled the finished version on 8 April, so exactly three months. I wrote everything from scratch – my only point of reference was the excellent Jaguar game, which I spent a fair bit of time playing under emulation. It was never my intention to do a direct port – although it shares the same name and obviously takes heavy inspiration from it, I wanted my game to have its own identity and I think we achieved that.

Do any particularly good or bad moments stand out from when you were actually developing *Downfall*?

GH: Well, the first couple of weeks were the hardest by far. I've never been a particularly brilliant programmer and I was even worse after such a long break, so much so that just getting the scrolling engine (a fundamental part of the game) rock-solid almost killed the project before it had truly started. It had me stumped for far longer than it should have done but when I finally got it going, everything progressed relatively smoothly. The best bit was definitely the Amiga community taking such an interest in its development and getting some very talented and dedicated people on board to help do the graphics, music, level design and sound effects made development much quicker and easier – not to mention the advice given from fellow programmers to help me through the occasional hiccup. I wouldn't be sitting here answering these questions now if it weren't for them.



» [Amiga] Some of the Blitz source code.

Downfall was originally written in Blitz BASIC rather than machine code, how much more powerful is Blitz?

GH: You can certainly do a lot more with Blitz than I've shown here. It'll never be as fast or as efficient as using assembler but you can achieve some smart effects with the Amiga's custom chips relatively easily using Blitz. There were plenty of games written with it back in the day, even a few commercial releases. If you're anything like me and the mere thought of assembly language makes your head explode, I'd recommend Blitz as a good alternative.

And finally, you're currently working on an enhanced version of *Downfall* for AGA Amigas, what do you feel that will add to the original?

GH: We've got parallax scrolling backgrounds now and more colourful presentation screens so the whole thing looks a lot nicer. We're also looking to add extra music and full support for CD32 joypads – so you won't need a keyboard at any stage. In terms of the gameplay itself it will be identical.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

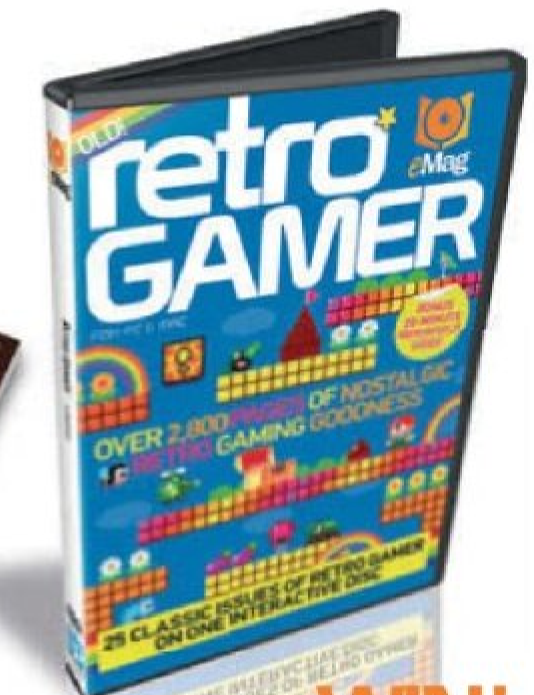
STAR LETTER

WHAT WAS THAT?

Dear Retro Gamer,
Something happened to me four years ago that made me become a subscriber to your magazine. I always used to purchase **Retro Gamer** by visiting a newsagent. On this occasion, I found myself in a small village newsagent. As I perused the shelves, I noticed an elderly lady behind the counter carefully watching me. I felt her eyes burning into my back as I struggled to find **Retro Gamer**. Glancing upward, I couldn't help but notice the extensive range of "top shelf" magazines. Giving up, I wandered over to her and asked nervously "Do you have **Retro Gamer**?" The lady paused, looking disgusted at me, then she turned round and shouted to an open doorway, "Brian, do we have *Retro Gay Mag*?" A loud male voice shouted back: "We don't have that stuff here." I scurried out, and I've been a subscriber ever since.
Tony Barker (crying in a darkened room)



Well Tony, we're not sure if this actually happened or if you were inspired by the corner shop scene in Little Britain. Regardless, it made us laugh, so have an eMag for your troubles, packed with awesome retro goodness. Thanks for subscribing, whatever the reason.



WIN!
Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 3**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words, or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What's your favourite Electronic Arts game?

TheDude18
The *SSX* Series. The only 'modern' series of games that really got me hooked. The fact that I was given the latest incarnation for the PS3 on Father's Day was an added bonus!

themightymartin
Dungeon Keeper. IMHO one of the most inventive games ever created. Too bad Peter Molyneux hasn't made a game that decent since leaving Bullfrog.

Matt_B
I'll go way back in time to 1985 when they published *The Bard's Tale* by Interplay. It's a cracking game, in many ways the blueprint for Western RPGs on computers, and it's just a shame that the series petered out in the early Nineties.

bertthedefender
Got to be *Populous* on the Amiga for me. It came bundled with the machine that my parents gave me for Christmas 1989. They couldn't bear the "dreary music" and heartbeat thumping out of the family TV every day! The game defined a genre and had so many subtle innovations. It epitomises the quality of the games they published back then, rather than a lot of the bug-ridden churned-out stuff they seem to get involved with these days.

RetroBob
Desert Strike for some great arcade blasting. Use a rapid-fire pad (it was designed for use with one) and you'll see your chopper spew death from above like never before.

Morkin
The first game that popped into my mind was *Burnout 3: Takedown*. Absolutely loved that game.

gman72
Road Rash 2 on the Mega Drive with the wicked Rob Hubbard music.

MikeFishCake
Out of all the EA software ever created, the one I spent the most time on was *Deluxe Paint* on the Amiga. Whilst it obviously wasn't a game, it contributed a massive amount to gaming history by being used to create many, many game graphics. Plus, the ability for my friends and me to create rude cartoons was too difficult to ignore.

Megamixer
Probably the 3DO version of *Road Rash* for me. A great enhancement of the series with FMV cut-scenes and licensed music that made the game more of an experience.

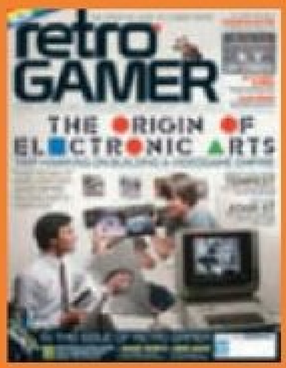
Eric
Crüe Ball and *PGA Golf* on Mega Drive, also just about any Electronic Arts game that has their original spinning logo at the start before they changed names to EA.

Sputryk
Madden, on the Amiga. For an easy game, went with LA Raiders – get the ball to a man on the wing and simply run, as he couldn't be caught. Am sure it was a fault, as it was too easy to win. Never got very far with any other team, though.

WHERE'S THE TAT?

Dear Darran,
What on earth happened to the Retro Vault that used to appear in the magazine? Looking at all the interesting retro tat (as my wife likes to call it) is one of my monthly highlights, and I was surprised and dismayed to see that it wasn't in issue 104. Please say it will be returning, as my wallet is now getting rather heavy, and I don't want to have to spend my money on stuff for the house.
James Turner

We will be looking at bringing The Vault back, but we're trying to do it so that it's in a more visual style and a lot more interesting to look at. In the meantime, there are loads of websites out there dedicated to keeping trade going in good old retro bits and bobs. It might take a little bit of trawling though – did you know the internet is pretty big these days? – so don't worry, we'll soon be bringing The Vault back to help you in your quest for stuff.



CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ

Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

» Matthew wants to see coverage of retro films and TV shows, but is it too much? Answers to the usual address, please.



RETRO TIME SHIFT

Dear Retro Gamer,

I'd just like to say that as much as I enjoy reading your magazine, I think there's definitely room for improvement. The easiest way to do this would be to increase the coverage of other aspects of retro. I love old retro TV shows like *The A-Team, The Fall Guy* and *Rentaghost*. I think it would be fantastic if you extended your remit to include looking at old films and TV, as well as toys that was popular at the time. Imagine doing a collector's guide to *Star Wars* toys, or a making of *Jaws* with Steven Spielberg. I love all aspects of retro and would love to see this sort of stuff appearing in future issues.

Matthew Whitbread

We'd also like a magazine that covered everything you mentioned Matthew, but we're not sure if Retro Gamer is that magazine. We'll occasionally put the odd thing in if it has a videogame connection, but covering toys, films and music would probably be a step too far for many readers.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

E3

This month we've been getting excited about the sheer amount of games that were shown off at this year's E3. Darran is convinced that he needs a Wii-U as soon as humanly possible, while Stuart is expecting great things from the new *Joe Danger* game. Steve just wants to go surfing…

MORE MSX

Dear Retro Gamer,

Please, please, could you have some more MSX coverage in the magazine.

Brian James

Your wish is our command. We'll get our resident MSX expert, Ashley Day on the case. In the meantime, here's a screenshot of *Mr Do* to tide you over.



» [MSX] Quite a few people have been asking about the MSX lately. We'll ensure it gets a healthy feature in the near future.

* THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY. . . This issue's covers that nearly happened



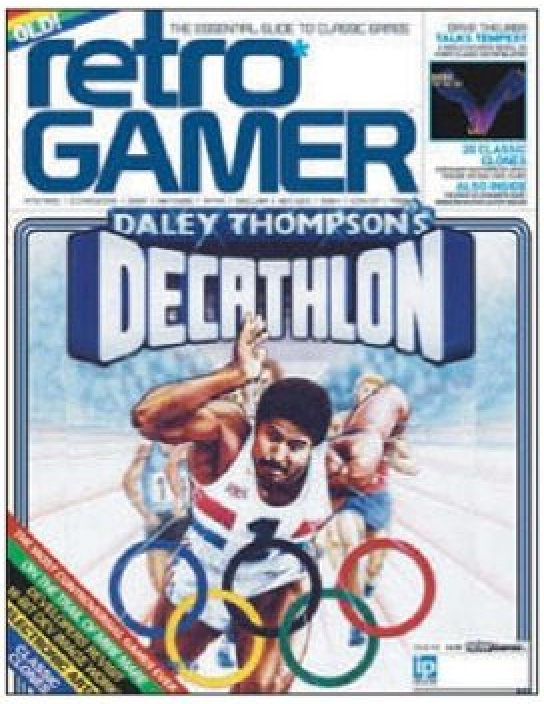
DARRAN

Seeing that the Olympics are happening at the moment, we really liked the idea of doing a Daley Thompson cover, particularly as we had some fantastic artwork courtesy of Bob Wakelin. We just couldn't get it to work though, so ended up abandoning it.



STUART

After failing to secure artwork for the amazing *Tempest* cover we had planned (think the side cabinet art blown up) we tried a cover featuring *Carmageddon*. Ultimately, we felt it wouldn't be as well recognized as our eventual chosen cover, so again, we ended up discarding it.





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MAKING A GRANDSTAND

After a six-year investigation, Retro Gamer reveals the secrets behind one of the world's most popular electronic games manufacturers

MORE EXCITING FEATURES TO LOOK FORWARD TO NEXT ISSUE

Uridium

■ Commodore 64 coder Andrew Braybrook recalls the creation of his legendary hit horizontal shoot-'em-up



Commodore 64

■ Developers, publishers and journalists get together to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Commodore's 8-bit micro



PC Engine Gems

■ Our latest Minority Report focuses on the best, quirkiest and most obscure games to be released on NEC's miniature console



Shareware Special

■ Key developers look back at the popular Amiga and PC shareware scene that helped change gaming

Also Inside

- Spectrum Rebirth
- Julian Rignall
- Diddy Kong Racing
- Time Pilot
- Captive
- Classic Game Room
- And much, much more


"Endless Space is the interstellar strategy game I've desired for a long time." RockPaperShotgun
"It´s bloody marvelous!!" Strategy Prime
"Endless Space looks as good and slick as anything we've seen." Strategy Informer
ENDLESS SPACE
This galaxy is ancient, and its first intelligent life was the civilization we call the Endless. Long before our eyes gazed upon the stars they flew between them, though all that remains of this people is what we call Dust. A substance found scattered, or in forgotten temples, it once gave powers to admirals and galactic governors. The galaxy will belong to the faction that can take control of the Dust and uncover its secrets...
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MONSTER PARTY

» Monster Party told the story of a kid with a baseball bat who gets press-ganged by an alien gargoyle named Bert into helping him rid his realm of monsters. What ensues is one of the most unusual platformers on the NES, with levels littered with enemies inspired by traditional horror characters. After defeating the Dark World Master to eradicate the monster menace, Bert shows his mean-spirited side.



» For helping him thwart the legion of monster invaders, Bert gives Mark a beautiful treasure chest. An avid baseball fan, Mark strongly hopes to find a pair of front row tickets to next week's Mets' game inside.



» Mark excitedly opens the chest and is delighted when a lovely contortionist princess emerges. Staring into her deep eyes, a strange alien sensation enters his stomach. 'Is this what they call love?' he thinks to himself.



» But then something horrendous happens. The smooth skin of the princess slowly melts into a mulch of blood and skin. The wedding is certainly off, at least until the princess gets some surgical work to restructure her features.



» Turns out it was all a terrible nightmare. Mark needs to buy a new mattress, but that matters not. The red sentient sun outside is shining, and if he's not quick he'll be late for his little league baseball game. Time to get a wriggle on.



» Mark grabs his sports bag and rushes towards the door. He's shocked when he opens it to find Bert. He really he did help to save Bert's realm. Which also means Bert did give him a melting princess to say thank you. Mark swings his baseball bat…



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